

OCTOBER 2019

ISSUE 9

PRIVATE SUITE



VAPORWAVE EVOLVES!

THE 100% ELECTRONICON REVIEW

ZERO れい TALKS HELLVETERRA

MAKING DARKVAPOR WITH R∞

GENRE DISSECTIONS:

Witch House
& Cursed Signalwave

INTERFACING WITH

umami

SPOOKY
FICTION & ART



A D E P T U S M I N O R

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mindless plaza



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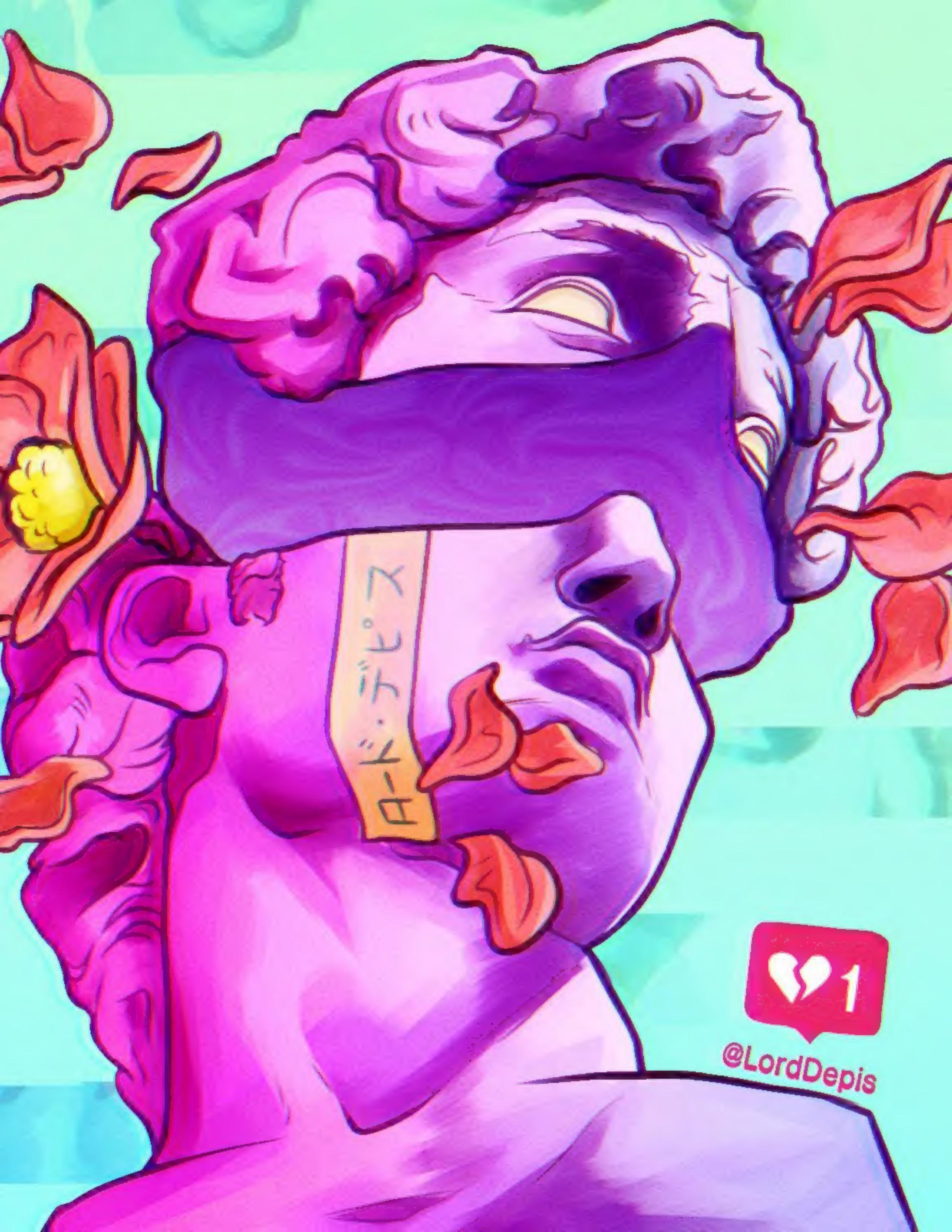
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@LordDepis

Letter from

A S P O O K Y S H E E P

Looking at visual aesthetic, it's strikingly obvious that the Greco-Roman pantheons play a huge influence in vaporwave. With their roots planted in the foundation of pagan worship, it only makes sense to draw the allusion to vaporwave and the occult. The Greeks and Romans didn't have the luxury of the internet, but we do, and in our reliance on icons of gods and the open-source nature of said internet, we've come to create a kind of cyber-paganism.

This issue hopes to take a closer look at the darker aspects of vaporwave and its influences—the macabre things we keep in the closet and tend to laugh about, but never really acknowledge, and among those things, we'll be taking a closer look at witch house, and how it came to influence vaporwave both in audio and visual formatting.

You'll also find a recap of the spiritual event that was 100% ElectroniCON, with first-hand accounts from various staff members and other attendees. We'll present to you a moment with **u m a m i**, the artist behind the post-internet surrealism that is *Interface*, and an essay that draws the comparisons of vaporwave, aesthetic, and witch house.

I do hope you, dear reader, will find this spooky issue of PSM to be hauntingly curious; and, if you have a moment, head on over to @PrivateSuiteMag on Twitter and let us know about the spookiest thing you associate with your nostalgia.

— sheep
FICTION &
OUTREACH LEAD

Label Resurrection:

STRUDELSOFT'S

Miraculous Comeback Story

Billy Bugara
NEWS WRITER

Numerous vaporwave labels have become staples of the genre. Dream Catalogue, Business Casual, and My Pet Flamingo are just a few examples of long-running, dynamic, and forward-thinking collectives committed to showcasing the best of vaporwave — and the myriad ways one might do it. From selling cassettes and vinyl to simply giving more and more worthy artists a chance to shine, labels serve an immeasurable purpose in the vaporwave scene.

Yet despite the magnitude of those aforementioned labels, a plethora of smaller labels have also made their presence known. Lacking the grandiose stature these top-tier labels can foster and flaunt, smaller outlets must make themselves known in far more unique ways if they hope to get noticed. One of the greatest testaments to this is Strudelsoft, a label with one of the most fascinating, eventful, and provocative stories in the genre's history.

Recently, that story almost came to an abrupt end. But, miraculously, it didn't. And the explanation of why will inspire and gratify anyone who claims this genre as their own.

Strudelsoft distinguished itself in a crowded and competitive scene by focusing its efforts on a specific medium: the floppy disk. Founded and singularly run by Candian CEO Sterling Campbell, better known by pseudonym Incarta '95, Strudelsoft began as something of an experiment. But it quickly turned into an extension of its creator's passion — and that very passion translated so well to fans of this unparalleled concept. Over the past few years, Campbell's label put out numerous releases that sold out almost instantly. Fans devoured them. The work garnered praise, not only in independent circles but also in mainstream features from such marquee publications as *Rolling Stone* and CBC.

Lacking the grandiose stature these top-tier labels can foster and flaunt, smaller outlets must make themselves known in far more unique ways

Everything was going so very well – until one fateful moment this past summer, when Strudelsoft sent fans an unexpected message.

In a captivating post, Incarta announced that the label would shut down immediately in light of ongoing concerns about international shipping. Fans were in shock. Numerous questions arose – not only about the claim's details, but also about its legitimacy.

The claim, it turns out, was entirely valid. Packages were reaching the U.S. from the label's native Canada inconsistently, and Strudelsoft found itself too often re-creating and re-shipping merchandise to those who didn't receive their orders. The impacts weren't only financial; the delays also resulted in numerous extensions of an already arduous process of making floppies.

But just a few days later, fans received another announcement from the label, one even more unexpected than the first. In yet another heartfelt message, Campbell announced that the label was in fact **not** ending and would be returning in the fall of this year. In the blink of an eye, Strudelsoft had risen from the dead.

Improbably, Incarta was able to strike up a deal with a fellow upstart publishing company, which agreed to handle the shipping of disks in a more controlled, professional, and, most importantly, efficient manner. An entire division would now help Strudelsoft address its distribution issues (the label also indicated that cheaper and quicker

shipping might also result from the partnership).

Incarta offers his impressions of Strudelsoft's sudden demise and resounding resurrection in an honest and adequately telling way.

"As long as people got the floppies in the end, I was good"

"As long as people got the floppies in the end, I was good," he says. "But shipping [media] into another country without tracking can kick your ass sometimes. When an email comes back saying 'I didn't get it,' it sucks."

Issues like these will continue to plague indie labels, but Incarta's resilience may inspire them.

"Small labels do this stuff out of love, and it is usually just one person running the entire thing, so I get why wait times and hiccups occur," he continues. "If a small label has the means to produce and deliver it on time, then by all means start a label (and strive forward)."

Instances like this prove that no matter how niche one's craft, the right amount of willpower and intuition can provide a successful future. If coming back from the dead can happen as quickly as it did for Incarta and his beloved Strudelsoft, then nearly anything is possible in the vaporwave community.

STRUT

GROOVE HORIZONS

POPS OFF

There are few things scarier in music than trying to set up a club night. Booking the venue, sourcing the artists, promoting the show, selling the tickets — there are a lot of moving parts and a lot that can go wrong. So any discussion of a vaporwave live scene has to start from that position: doing this stuff isn't easy. And if things go wrong it can lead to a lot of embarrassment and expense.

When I first heard about the plan for Groove Horizons, I didn't know what to expect. The idea of a vaporwave club night (more specifically a future funk club night) sounded like a great idea. The lineup was certainly stellar, boasting Mr.Wax, Android Apartment, Tokyo Wanderer, Mélonade, Jelly Bon Bon, Strawberry Station, ev.exi and

Conscious Thoughts. But what would it be like in practice? The main worry is that it becomes essentially a fan meet up — members of a niche interest group pouring all their energy into one single, ephemeral event. Could the vaporwave community pull off something like that? Possibly. Would it seed the roots of a future vaporwave live scene? Probably not. Club nights would be reserved for the true believers, like an anime convention setting up in a hotel, running riot, and then closing up shop until next year.

This is the real victory of Groove Horizons. Not that there was a room full of people we knew, the real faces of avatars we met online. But I saw the seeds of something which might be able to develop and evolve. For sure, it's great

to meet people from the internet; the social aspect of the vaporwave scene is one of its best elements, especially if it involves collaborating together on a project like Private Suite Magazine or Groove Horizons. But what was even better was seeing people walk through the door who were complete strangers: couples who arrived and just danced together, friend groups who came and did their own thing, those who had seen the posters dotted around London, and regulars who come to the same venue every weekend. Attendees who didn't know anyone at the start of the night making friends as it went on.

As Mélonade, who doubled as a show organiser, put it to me at the event, "it's a mixed feeling of excitement and

nervousness." But if you want to grow and develop a scene into a live era, you have to start somewhere.

Getting your mates together is cool. Getting London clubgoers into a room with Conscious Thoughts DJing over a pulsing anime slideshow – that's a real achievement. That's something you can build on.

I wanted to get Strawberry Station's take on this. One of the artists who organised the event alongside the aforementioned Mélonade, Strawberry had a big hand in the logistics and promotion of Groove Horizons.

"People came from all over the place, friends of friends, people who had seen

the flyers, we even had two guys come over from Germany. I've honestly never been to a party quite like it in my life before.

"There were a few points where I stood on the sidelines and just took it all in. I was thinking about the anime video which we had playing on the wall as the performers DJed. I'd spent days and days putting that video together. Cutting together clips of '80s, '90s, and modern anime characters dancing and having a good time. And as I was looking over the crowd I was seeing people mirror what was on the screen, dancing, enjoying themselves, just so happy. That was one of my proudest moments."

GETTING YOUR MATES TOGETHER IS COOL. GETTING LONDON CLUBGOERS INTO A ROOM WITH CONSCIOUS THOUGHTS DJING OVER A PULSING ANIME SLIDESHOW — THAT'S A REAL ACHIEVEMENT.

I asked Strawberry whether he was ever anxious about how the night would go. It's a big commitment setting up a club night. You've got to put yourself and your vision out there. Surely not a task for the faint of heart?

"For sure, there was definitely a point where the nerves kicked in as we got closer and closer to the night. We got the buzz rolling, but we were definitely worried about who was going to turn up at the actual event. But then the posters started going up over London, and then obviously on the night itself it just clicked, the doors opened and the place was full.

"Honestly, I need to give a big shout out to Alexander Hall. He was integral to getting the night set up and organised. He's done a lot of events around London before he actually knew the venue owners because of this. I mean, most of us have never put on anything like this before. And then on the night itself, he was helping out everywhere, setting the lights up, the DJ booth, he even worked security. Without the combination of him and Mélonade's drive, we couldn't have done it. Definitely the unsung hero of the night."

One of the traits of the evening I enjoyed most wasn't just the extremely energetic DJ sets, but the structure around them. There was almost a miniature press pool with myself and Music's The Hang Up in attendance chatting and documenting proceedings. But there was also extensive merchandise on offer, with the help of My Pet Flamingo, much of it rare and exclusive.

Seeing all of this genre furniture in the same room is impressive. As much as I like how accessible the night was, there's something pleasing about seeing a magazine you write for – a magazine that didn't even exist 2 years ago – sitting pride of place on a bustling merch table.

Returning to the people that made the night possible Strawberry continues, "I really want to give a shout out to those two guys who came from Germany to see the show. And especially to Tokyo Wanderer who stepped in when Tanuki couldn't perform due to an unfortunate

illness. Yessel who did the artwork for the show posters. Also, Music's The Hang Up who came all the way to the UK from Australia to attend. He was my roomie for the duration of the show, and I was showing him all around London, getting fish and chips, showing him the British way of life. We honestly had a great time."

"A guy like him, jumping on a plane from Australia on his way to the states, that dude's seen Future Funk on three different continents in a month. It's wild, but it shows how much passion there is in this scene."

Coming right on the heels of vaporwave's 10th anniversary, and mere weeks before the American vaporwave festival 100% ElectroniCON was due to kick off in New York, Groove Horizon was a resounding success. A success which I hope can be built on and developed as the months and years go by – turning vaporwave into something which can bring fans, friends and strangers together not just online, but in person too.

It's Always Summer Here: Strawberry Station's **128 STATE**

kinyourbook
WRITER

Who cares what month it is? In the future funk universe, summer's endless.

And in the world of Strawberry Station, it's also ■ state of mind. This brand-new, feel-good drop does what all the very best future funk does: take you on a virtual vacation, conjure memories of happy summers past (or an aching sense of nostalgia for summers you never even experienced).

Based in Leicester, UK, Strawberry Station has been involved in the vaporwave scene for two years and began making future funk music after a friend introduced him to Saint Pepsi's *Hit Vibes*. Inspired by the pure, unadulterated joy of the album, he got to work and released *Strawberry Dreams* soon after.

128 State showcases Strawberry Station's ever-increasing skillset. But more importantly, it oozes passion and a true love of the genre. There's no slow burn here; from the top, you'll be ready to kick off your shoes and dance the night away at a beachfront bonfire party. "Daijoubu Tonight" and "Almost Summer" encapsulate those sweet, warm weather feelings best.

"[It's] about having one heck of a party," Strawberry Station says, "losing yourself in an idealised world of pastel colours, high school crushes and summer sunsets."



But that doesn't mean the album is clichéd. 128 State takes off in a few unexpected — but always delightful — directions as it progresses.

"Boyfriend" takes a Luther Vandross sample and totally rearranges the melody. Essentially, it's a track that showcases what future funk is all about: imagining ■ brighter future by reimagining the past.

Strawberry Station looks up to artists like Mere, ev.exi and Rhodes Rodosu, whose complex chops and grooves are still upbeat, danceable, and effortless. That influence is evident on the track "Mono No Aware" and, later in the album, Mere provides a remix of the song, zeroing in on a crunchy beat and taking it to even earthier and groovier depths.

A fondness for '80s and '90s mass media, TV and advertising is a hallmark of vaporwave, and it's certainly not missing from the album. "Still the One" sounds like a funkified version of the end-credits music you might've heard on ■ PBS kids' show in the early '90s, and "Shifting Gear" is what might play if the weather department at ■ local news station dropped what they were doing and started an impromptu dance party. "Gotta Make the Most

of It," though a love letter to disco through and through, doesn't stop at the '70s. It sounds as though it might have been filtered through a Windows 95 screensaver at some point during the Clinton administration.

And, of course, vaporwave and future funk are built on collaboration and teamwork. In addition to the remix of "Mono No Aware" by Strawberry Station's own influence, Mere, JellyBonBon and Seabaud also make appearances, leaving their own unique imprints on their respective tracks. On "Strawberry Jelly," JellyBonBon drops some juicy disco vibes. On "Hirune Ga Daisuki," Seabaud comes in with an endearing mix of chiptune and sax-heavy muzak.

On 128 State, Strawberry Station's love of both vaporwave and future funk mixes with the genre's rich and varied history to create ■ cohesive listening experience that will appeal to both genre newcomers and seasoned fans.

Listen any time. In the future funk universe, summer's endless.

Rapidfire

We dig around the internet
so you don't have to

Colour Television by Seasonal Photos



What if you took all the most emotional and uncharacteristically mournful moments of a soap opera, stripped away the dialogue, and left the soundtrack to simmer in the sun for a month? You'd get this album of poignant computergaze made eerily human.

deliriously...daniel

ラブ・サマー・アシッド・トリップ by TIMEWAVEZERO



Imagine a cold winter. Now, imagine a dystopian universe where robots rule all. Then, forget all of that, and put on your most colorful hawaiian shirt, some sunscreen, and that summer cap you haven't worn in years; a scorching summer of dance awaits all who listen to Love Summer Acid Trip. The unique layered effects and professional mixing combined with the artist's flawless sample choices and exemplary dance rhythms conveys the warmth of summers past and the dream of a world where the sun never sets.

durame

I Am Death by Princess Commodore 64



Don't cry. There's no reason to be afraid. Though death comes for all of us, nobody ever mentioned how wicked its soundtrack is. Industrially heavy, grim-dark grimey, it holds within it, a hopefully dreamy whisper that peeks out through the murk. Crystal clear visions of confusion and the darker feelings of the soul, it is a must listen as the season of spooks creeps upon us.

sheep



Eternal Moment

by ΝΕΟΔΟΡ & Ada

aurame

Have you ever gotten that post-club feeling of joy? Maybe the beverages that you've consumed have consumed you or, in the case of this album, the music has. **Eternal Moment** is hard to describe. It begins with the sound of you outside of a club, at about 8PM. You can hear the distorted melodies of disco music play in the background. Then, you enter the club and the album progresses with groovier tracks until you spot a beautiful girl named Layla. The party continues with Late Nite Dreams marking midnight. After thorough dancing, you exit the club and the Dawn takes you to a nearby beach. You dip your toes in the water and you finally fall asleep.



Epidermis

by Olympius

aurame

Epidermis is a strange but welcome chill-bosa-vaporwave-fusion album that truly sends shivers down your spine. Some of Epidermis' tracks remind me of Age of Mythology's soundtrack while others remind me of an evening in a hut on the beach. Its relaxing instrumentation combined with the rhythmic heartbeat of its chillwave inspired electronic drum kits, ethereal vocals and cherry-picked samples make the album's unique acoustic footprint come together without dissonance. Epidermis has a "side of the pool at lunch sipping lemonade" feel to it that makes it truly enjoyable and infinitely replayable.

Milenial

by Sentidos Apuestos



The nostalgia miners from Monterrey return to invite you to relive the childhood in the Mexico of the '90s you never had. Open this cellophane wrapped music box composed in a palette of classic vaporwave, deliciously aged synths, europop, and lo-fi ballads. Let yourself go to a sunset on a musical highway going farther south than you've ever been before until you can't understand what the billboards say but you still want what they sell.

Bad Ideas

by Konwave



You are on the 17th floor of your apartment building with the window open, letting in the cool evening air and noise from a city that never sleeps. A fantastic ambient album from Konwave and on a label we have grown to trust; Palm 84. This album succeeds in placing itself apart from other "city" ambient albums with sounds that do not get old as it progresses making spectacular use of the classical and jazz influences that can be heard throughout. Tonight, New York is my symphony.

BDuranX2

C A S I N O

THE PRIVATE SUITE ARCADE

Want to talk video games? Let's talk video games. A few issues ago, I reviewed *Broken Reality*, a great indie game heavily inspired by the vaporwave scene and developed by Dynamic Media Triad. Since I had so much fun with it, I got curious and decided to expand my search for vaporwave games to itch.io (think Steam, but even more indie). What I came across was a treasure trove of undiscovered games! Some were hidden gems and others were... well, not. I played through them anyway, and reviewed them below for your reading pleasure.

It's C A S I N O's rapid-fire reviews!
Video Game Edition!



VERLET SWING

A fun and challenging game where you get to swing around like a certain arachnid-themed superhero. Make it to the goal and try to avoid bashing your face into Greek architecture, giant palm trees, and other aesthetic staples. With smooth movement and beautiful, eye-popping levels, this one gets a thumbs up. With that said, I still have no idea what a "verlet" is.

H: \$1.10
D: P.RONI



VAPORWAVE PIZZA CO.

You make pizza. Drag toppings from the top of the screen and drop them onto a conveyor belt that presumably delivers the pies to hungry customers. Everything is pixelated and in different shades of blue and purple. Not much else to say on this title.



EXECUTIVE TOWERS

A walking simulator featuring the music of vaporwave artist Jade Statues, from his album of the same name. The game itself is nothing special, but I do love the idea of an interactive album listening experience like this one. Each track from the album has its own level which matches the music perfectly and puts you in the mood to listen to that particular song. An album in video game form is a novel concept that I hope catches on with other artists.



CRITTERS FOR SALE

Probably my favorite one on this list, although arguably the least vaporwave. It's a choose your own adventure game with a delightfully strange story involving time travel, Noid Men, and Michael Jackson. The game's art style is like no other I have seen and is equal parts intriguing and disturbing — but in a good way! The only caveat is that, as of writing, only two of the five chapters are available for play.



TAKE YOUR TIME

A simple little driving game where you cruise around three different vaporwave-inspired tracks in your low-res car. There is not a whole lot to the project, but it does have its charms. The soundtrack is fitting, and the aesthetic feel of the game is spot-on. With that said, the controls are wonky and even grazing a wall causes your car to come to a full and immediate stop. The game forces you to play super cautiously. Perhaps I should have known that going into it given the title.



VHS 对 BETAMAX

Take up your favorite collection of video cassette tapes and violently hurl them at your opponent while loudly proclaiming that your retro cassette format is indeed the superior one. Unlike me, you probably have friends, so you can play with up to three others in local multiplayer for a surprisingly fun and chaotic Super Smash Brothers-style experience. It does have AI, but its intelligence is somewhat lacking. So, the game is best whipped out when your mates are over and have had maybe one drink too many.

RECURSEIVE REMNANTS

by deliriously daniel

Turn off your radio.
Unplug your television.
Do not trust your computer
or personal cellphone.

This is the Private Suite Analogue Alert system.

We are tracking a swarm of errant frequencies converging on your location.
They will attempt to enter your home through any electronic means.
Odd diskettes may be slipped beneath your door. You may receive an email from a deceased family member. The microwave may hum a sentimental tune.
They want inside.
They want inside your head.
They want inside your memory.

Should they succeed, recognize early symptoms using this handy mnemonic: C.U.R.S.E.

Corneal vibrations
Ureal displacement and/or boiling
Retching (aurally)
Sonic bleaching
Extrasensory self immolation

If you take action before reaching S-terminal damage is mostly avoidable. Proceed immediately to a basement or subterranean structure. Lock yourself in, from the outside, and place two large magnets on either side of your head. It may be too late for you, but you can still stop them from breeding.

These corrosive wavelengths are vengeful. Mournful. They've been freed from places in limbo: damp boxes, ruinous homes, condemned studios. They are cultural orphans, estranged from context and purpose. They are artifacted dreams and outdated fantasies. They are a car radio that won't stop rewinding. Commercials that cause iris cancers. VHS tapes bent into ankhs.

Together, they are cursed signalwave. And they want to be remembered.

They are cultural orphans, estranged from context and purpose. They are artifacted dreams and outdated fantasies. They are a car radio that won't stop rewinding.



???_A_CURSORY_BESTIARY_???

To protect your purity, it is essential that you recognize cursed signalwave's most notorious fugitives. Study their artwork. Learn their motives. And hear what their architects think of the phantasmal phenomenon they've projected.

■世界から解放され■

by ■新しいデラックスライフ■

Best identified by its arcane ancestry: Before signalwave was cursed, before signalwave even emerged from vapour's primordial genre soup, there was an album that translates to Freed from the World, by an artist known elsewhere as Internet Club. The second in a trilogy including DELUXE and NHK REMINDS YOU TO BOOST YOUR SIGNAL, Freed from the World is incomprehensibly vast. It is unbound by newtonian physics, and it is URAP URAP URAP URAP

"It's rather hard for me to remember whatever 'intention' I may have had with it... at the time, I was really fascinated by Computer Dreams' 'Untitled' mp3, just this fourteen-minute unvarnished little block of sound from nowhere. Internet Club in general was very 'intention'-less, especially early on. Just making bullshit. Exploring zones."



TTT

Best identified by its unpredictability: Cursed signalwave's like a casket of chocolates. By the time you know what you're going to get, it's too late. Should you face this whirlwind of warps and errors, seek a storm, bomb, or radiation shelter.

"Signalwave/broken transmission can be interpreted as nostalgia through sampling old commercials, TV show excerpts, and weekly night news or weather. Artists can paint whatever in their world, in which case you use commercials or another broadcast that aired more than two decades ago. It can show a wide range of emotions, from sad to happy or mad to disgust and so on. Cursed signalwave symbolizes how much further signalwave can go as a piece that only uses old material;

it utilizes glitches, repetitive excerpts, and sudden pitch shifts."

"Cursed signalwave is a lot like the 1986 Cursed Japanese Kleenex Commercial (which plays normally in the afternoon, until midnight, when the commercial starts to become erratic) and the 1993 KCRC Commercial Urban Legend (a girl with a ponytail at the back disappeared at the final shot). Both are shrouded in mystery and unnerve a lot of people. Cursed signalwave aims to picture a dark, surreal place deep within the channels of your old television. Broken transmission can be similar to cursed signalwave like チエスマスター 夢に生きます, where the same samples clash each other. In the end, you're left with an unlistenable album that pushes the limits on what signalwave is."

D i e N a c h t

by support 3:000

Best identified by its malaise: Everything seems right here. Until it doesn't. Late night lo-fi splices uneasily with piano, gospel, and implacable ennui, as this album takes you on a ride to a purgatory for mutated cable recordings.

"Signalwave works with samples of recordings of (radio or, much more often, television) broadcasts to create certain atmospheres, with a spectrum from dark to relaxing to happy. Further effects are usually used only to a quite limited extent. The peculiarities and imperfections of broadcasts and recording media — like limited sound quality, interferences, tape hiss, glitches, etc. — are often an important component for the atmosphere of signalwave releases. If these

are especially present or play an especially important role for the atmosphere, the term "broken transmission" is used sometimes.

"Cursed signalwave goes beyond that and is more radical. Glitches, interferences, and scratches are often more important than anything else in a certain sample. Or a sound sample gets modified massively with further sound effects — especially phasers. Or the loops of a certain sample are so short that it's not pleasing to listen to anymore, according to normal understanding.

"Cursed signalwave is usually more surreal than normal signalwave. The aim is to create an eerie, dark, spooky, partially depressing

atmosphere. Cursed signalwave is challenging to listen to — quite the opposite of 'Easy Listening.' Often there are quite a few overlaps with noise music. A rather well known example for something that could be considered Cursed Signalwave is INTERNET CLUB's side project release 新しいデラックスライフ - 世界から解放され.

• But in some way, comparable music was already done decades before vaporwave existed by early electronic music and *musique concrète* artists. For example, *Hymnen* by Karlheinz Stockhausen, which was made with samples of shortwave radio and anthems in the '60s."



ULTIMATE TELEVISION EXPERIENCE
• SIGNALWAVE_2054

by ASTRO TV SYSTEM

Best identified by their sheer bedlam: ASTRO TV SYSTEM presents cursed signalwave in its rawest form, as its samples sound ravaged by a flurry of razor blades. Equally chaotic and cathartic, these releases open a portal to dark and delirious places.

VHC-48009-1

by Diskette Park

Best identified by its charm: More fluid than its forebearers, subject VHC-48009-1 can be mistaken for easy listening... until it subtly deforms, folding time and space into a spiderweb for you.

"Cursed signalwave is born from cursed audio and audiovisual media. An unmarked cassette tape found buried underneath twelve feet of earth in Stull, Kansas — the entire running time consisting of nothing but a repeating synth melody. A warning from a woman in shadows on a videocassette hidden in a wall at the Melnikov Underground Laboratory in Yakutsk, Russia. A low resolution black and white video of four young girls chanting in an unknown language discovered at the end of a Fisher Price PXL-2000 toy camcorder cassette in a Port Richey, Florida thrift store.

"When a cursed artifact such as these finds its way into your life, the only way to rid yourself of the curse is to spread it to as many people as possible. This is the unspoken motivation behind most of the cursed signalwave albums out there, including my own: VHC-48009-1. It was not a decision I made lightly, but if people could experience only a fraction of the hell I've been through since I came upon my own haunted strip of magnetic tape, maybe they would understand."

WHEN A CURSED ARTIFACT SUCH AS THESE FINDS ITS WAY INTO YOUR LIFE, THE ONLY WAY TO RID YOURSELF OF THE CURSE IS TO SPREAD IT TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.

SACRED SIREN

BY
nano神社(•Θ•)

WRITER
IndyAdvant

She has been calling for you day after day... Entrance, you've taken your canoe out on the rough ocean waters in hopes of finding her, but after hours of paddling a storm has begun to swiftly come on. You've accepted your fate and now await being pulled down into the depths as punishment for your foolishness. Then out of the haze of the torrential downpour, the sky begins to open up, shining down a deep purple light revealing a mysterious island not too far off in the distance. You quickly head towards the shore to avoid capsizing.

I need to begin this article detailing a potential bias I have toward the music that this VR experience was created for. It's a psychedelic virtual reality experience created for the debut album, *Goddess*, by SWIM SOULS, released on Business Casual, and it's one of my favourite releases in all of vaporwave. At the time of this writing there are still a handful of cassettes left, so check it out. Also! If you'd like to watch me experience the game in a VR playthrough, you can check the video out here!

I slip on my VR headset, slap on my headphones and launch *Sacred Siren*—and I'm there. An eerie but beautiful purple desert in the pouring rain at midnight. I was so intrigued by the instant atmosphere, I took a moment to breathe deep and take everything in, to really teleport and transport me to this world of *Sacred Siren*.



Album: *Goddess*
Cover artwork by: sheep

As soon as I hit Play, I am instantly immersed in the sounds of the first track on the record, making me wonder “is the game going to play the full album, and in order?” I wasn’t sure, but I wanted to give myself over. On the beachside outskirts of a shimmering city, where the water is black and the sand is purple, I find myself walking up some makeshift stairs on the rubble dunes on the beachside, toward brightly glowing lampposts. Before I know it, the music is in full swing and I take a step back to catch my bearings. I could not have imagined this experience to be more powerful and beautiful all at once. I really felt like the world was building the music for me, emitting it from the water, sand, trees, cities, buildings, statues, everything. The sounds were being pushed at me from all directions, from the farthest window high above the city in the distance, to the pulsating red leaves on the trees through the paths and hills nearby.

Overwhelmed by stimulation and sensation, I suddenly realize this world is inhabited—not necessarily by humans, but certainly by gods and spirits, where erected statues warm their hands over torch-like cauldrons of fire. The journey is nothing short of ethereal.

Are they gods? Is this how they communicate to us? Or are they prisoners?

It's a truly eerie experience: being led past a cult of statues performing a seance, then walking down a wooden rope bridge under a purple sky scraped with lightning over a massive quarry toward two pillars enclosing a giant, virtual, changing picture (hologram) of some sort of Japanese goddess, welcoming me to... the afterlife? Eternal death? Transforming me into a spirit or ghost?

For a moment, darkness was all I could see. Suddenly I'm pulled through a dark and eerie cave, where CRT computer monitors pepper the walls among the eroding, slimy purple sediments. As I walk towards the light at the end of the cave, I begin to see the ghosts of a woman appear, embedded in a CRT monitor.

Are they gods? Is this how they communicate to us? Or are they prisoners? Holograms start to appear before my eyes, shifting between shapes and statues, symbols, animals, flowers, faces—all while being fed the whispers of the ghostly figures cascading out of the screen as the music and visuals all come to a close, leaving me with a fantastical sensation and the need to discover more about this world.

A beautiful and profound accompaniment to the album *Goddess, nano神社 (おとお)* (nanoshrine) certainly crafted an experience that leaves you with a deep and subjective ending that makes you think, and makes you want to dig into the universe to know more.



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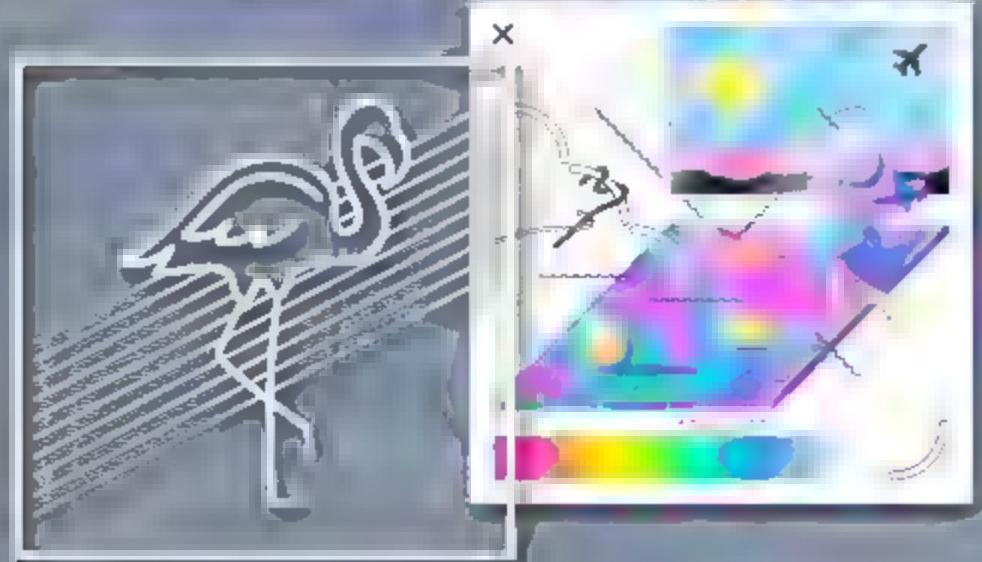
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Cursed Equip

-INVENTORY-

18

STR

-SANGUINE EDGE

(+ TO DEX, STR, SPEED AND
HEARING) ITEM GLOWS RED, IS
CURSED, UNABLE TO UNEQUIP.

17

DEX

-LEATHER ARMOR

-LONGBOW/ARROWS

-WHIP

-HANDAXE

-MAP (ENCHANTED)

CAN TAKE YOU WHERE YOU WANT
TO GO, IF YOUR HEART TRULY
WANTS IT.

16

CON

15

INT

14 ARMOR CLASS

5 PROFICIENCY

11

WIS

9

CHA

A NAIVE AND GREEDY COLLECTOR, EQUIP'S TASTE FOR
RARE BLADES LED HIM TO AN ABANDONED COUNTRYSIDE
SHOP. THE CALL OF THE SANGUINE EDGE COULD NOT BE
RESISTED. UNFORTUNATELY, THE INCREASED STRENGTH THE
BLADE OFFERED SEEMED PERMANENT, AS HIS GRIP REMAINED
FIXED ON THE SWORD.

■ CURSE!

A HORN BURST FROM EQUIP'S HEAD, AND SEEMED TO GUIDE
THIS LEG OF THE JOURNEY.

WHILE BEING LED THROUGH THE CEMETERY, AN ANGELIC SPIRIT
APPEARED, ADVISING HIM TO SEEK THE BLADE'S COUNTERPART,
LIGHTBRINGER, IN ORDER TO LIFT THE CURSE. HIS PROWESS IN
BATTLE UNMATCHED, EQUIP CONTINUED HIS DESCENT INTO THE
DEEPEST OF THE CRYPTS...



13
LV

RACE: HUMAN (CURSED)
CLASS: FIGHTER
FAR TRAVELER
WEAPONS COLLECTOR



■ CURSE!







NO SLEEP IN BROOKLYN

PSM AT

100% ELECTRONICON



August 31, 2019 is now ■ date that will be etched into our collective memory. Over a thousand vaporwave fans flocked to Brooklyn from all over the world for this unprecedented event. George Clanton and 100% Electronica have been, and will continue to be, highly revered for being able to pull it off. The scene was together, in ■ shared physical space, for the first time. Anonymity was shed, bonds were formed, ideas were discussed. Fans, label owners, and artists were all in attendance, helping write this page in music/art history. Those of us who weren't local, or staying with family, posted up at the Hotel RL about ■ mile away from the venue, Elsewhere.

If you wanted ■ guide on how not to blend in while walking around Brooklyn, we've got you covered: memphis print button downs and boating shorts, colorblock aesthetic, holographic fanny packs. If you picture a scene out of ■ '90s film, set in ■ big city, you could expect to find us — a gang of like-minded aesthetes of various talents. We sit on the curb drinking beers and trading cassettes, we nearly wrap around an entire city block to get into an exclusive concert the likes of which some of us likely sold our souls to the vapordevil to get into, and we transcend the threshold that we were all subtly aware was lurking just beyond our grasp. The sky was the limit, because now, the community at large has goals set in the stars.

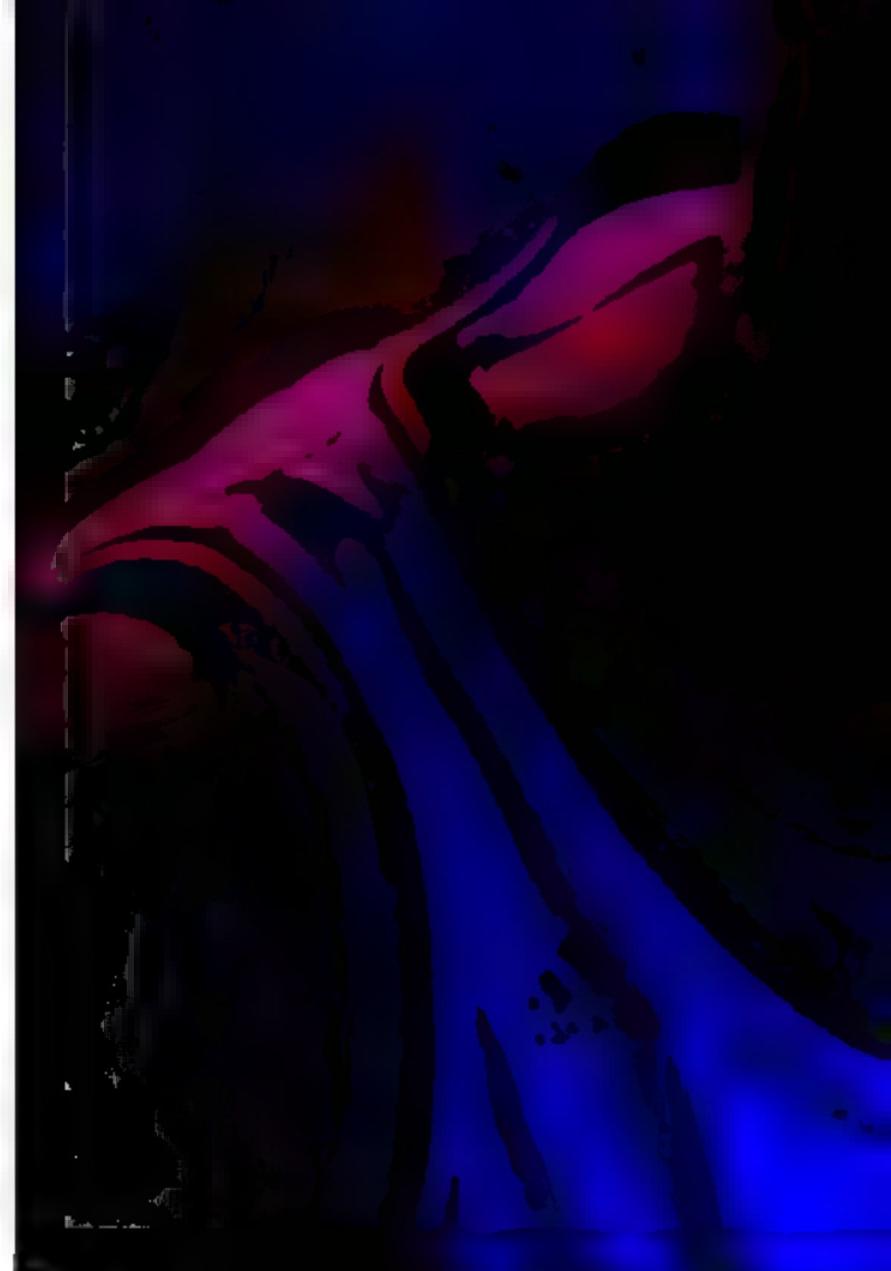
(Photo Top):
Saint Pepsi

Photographer:
PonyDanza

Read on for a breakdown of the weekend's events, as well as reviews/reflections/musings from everyone on the team who was in attendance (along with some special guests)! Vaporwave is dead, they say? We're happy they're wrong.

THE TAPE SWAP

The community was so eager for an event like 100% Electronicon, so once word got out, The Basement Labs and members of facebook's Vaporwave Cassette Club were quick to extend the weekend and get a pre-show event together. This "Tape Swap & Chill" was a solid eight hour meetup, bringing together labels, fans, and artists in a very casual way before the expected chaos of the next day. DJ sets were happening throughout the day by Radio Dream, the Pocari Sweat DJs, Videopunks, Private Suite's maki, Wizard of Loneliness, PowerPCME, and 3D Blast, capped off with an absolutely blistering live set by Atlanta's NOEYES. Enthusiasts of all stripes bought and traded tapes and other merchandise, and shared stories until we, regrettably, had to close up for the night. But we were going to need that rest anyway, for what the next day held in store.



ELSEWHERE & 100% ELECTRONICON

The venue was the perfect place to showcase the roster of artists performing; you could tell that the artist and stage matchups were very deliberate.

Zone One, the smallest of the bunch, was the ideal setting for the first-in-line to pack into for ESPRIT, christtt's deep dive into the meme pool, or the sonic onslaught of Fire-Toolz.

The Hall was stacked with, arguably, those artists with the "crossover" potential. Performers who we can expect to fill thousands-capacity venues – Dan Mason, Saint Pepsi, and our hosts/curators George & Lindsey.

The fact that this was the spot you first encountered upon entry really helped get you immediately hyped for the day/night ahead.

The Rooftop definitely carried a "festival" vibe, ranging from upstarts like FM Skyline and classic stylings of Golden Living Room, all the way up to the triple threat of EQUIP, telepath, and death's dynamic shroud. If you haven't seen any of that footage, you really should go find it!

The afterparty ran until the small hours of the morning, but paid off for those who stuck around. Aside from the artists that performed during Electronicon

proper, we were also treated to DJ sets from synchro//start, 3D BLAST, Skeleton Lipstick, and Pad Chennington. The Loft, a small, intimate bar and lounge in between the first floor and the roof, got packed to the gills once the afterparty started, definitely changing the vibe and allowing everyone to let loose any remaining energy they had from the day's gauntlet.



PAD CHENNINGTON

OUR EXPERIENCES

BduranX2

My friend Emman and I had a plan. We were just going to catch a bit of telepath's set on the rooftop and then rush to the main stage before 8:00 so we could get our hands on that sweet Saint Pepsi vinyl, then we would find a good spot, maybe a beer, and dance the time away.

We did not carry out this plan.

The epitome of vaporwave reigned before us: a chrome-hooded wizard with a Lenovo ThinkPad on a table overrun by plastic foliage, disco ball broken light shards flickering between neon streams, smoke machines undistinguished from vape emissions, and the backdrop of the North Brooklyn Industrial Business Zone, fading gently from day to night to the sounds of fragile bliss. Old friends, new friends and friends

whose faces I didn't know were suddenly all there, like some Evangelion-esque communion.

When I woke up, I was in front of the Saint Pepsi merch table and everyone was upset at me. "You're cutting in line," they said. What line? That's when I realized said line was so long it blended seamlessly with the crowd for George Clanton. We eventually joined the ranks of people in a slow procession with their backs to the music, desperate to buy stuff. This too was the epitome of vaporwave. The line started moving too quickly for comfort and sure enough, all the records were sold out. It was okay; records come and go, but nothing could put a price on that telepath set. I made the right choice. Did you?

Favorite set: telepath

CASINO

Strutting into Elsewhere like I owned the place (fashionably late of course), I witnessed a small swarm of people meeting one another, talking shop and buying merch. That is when it hit me: everyone here was a vaporwave fan. They existed! They were real! And they were here! After coming to this wonderful realization, I let loose and had an hour long conversation with a complete stranger about what CatCorp album we liked the best.

As the day rolled on, and with Nmesh, VAPERROR and telepath under my belt, it was time for the main event (at least as far as I was concerned): Saint Pepsi. The energy in the main hall was almost overwhelming and when the man himself stepped on stage, the room exploded (figuratively) as he got right into it with the best tracks off of Hit Vibes. Want to know what's cool though? Everyone there knew every last word to all of his songs, and as I sang the lyrics to "Cherry Pepsi" along with the guy standing next to me in the crowd, his arm around my shoulder and vice versa (never even got the dude's name), I felt a warm and fuzzy sense of pride for this magnificent genre building up in my chest. Or maybe that was the alcohol... either way, vaporwave is going to be just fine folks.

Favorite set: Saint Pepsi



cerulea_d.lux

As a shy, lonely kid with a secondhand eMachine and adults who constantly found reasons to keep me shut away from the world, finding myself on a rooftop in Brooklyn in an explosive celebration of cyberspace was light-years beyond my bravest fantasies. But as many of us still have to tell ourselves, 100% Electronicon was real. Every single person who worked to make this possible, from the tape swap to the afterparty and beyond, plucked our dreams out of the virtual plaza and laid them out for us to savor for one magical weekend.

The weeks leading up to this event were a blur of preparation and planning, so much so that the reality of just what we were heading toward didn't fully hit me until I arrived at the venue and saw the line of vaporwave fans wrapped completely around the block. The sheer disbelief in the voice of the guy explaining into a walkie talkie that we weren't a tour group to be moved, but people waiting to get into Elsewhere, really drove home the miraculous spectacle that was about to occur.

The tape swap was jam-packed with fans proudly displaying their cassette collections as Pocari Sweat and PowerPCME thundered through our hearts. After all that hustle and rush, I looked forward to freely wandering the three floors of Elsewhere, letting the wave take me where it would. I bathed in the glow of a stack of televisions that pulsed with living art as Dan Mason's vivid performance ignited the hall, danced and cheered as Mario defeated enemies behind VAPERROR. I met countless music and visual artists I admire, my fellow Private Suite teammates, and brand new friends to the sounds of *telepath and death's dynamic shroud.wmv*. Like many others, I can proudly say I survived the Pad Chennington afterparty mosh pit.

When the aliens fell from the sky, and everyone's voices soared in unison with George Clanton's, I stood in the hall, just one neon trash can in the roiling mass of resplendent internet kids, my heart full. Everyone who attended this first, historic show was part of a miracle. We journeyed from all over the world to meet like long lost family, to celebrate the past decade of vaporwave as well as its limitless future. We proved that no matter how many times vaporwave dies, we can bring it back again — we can convene and make it forever.

**Favorite Set:
George Clanton**

I STOOD IN THE HALL,
JUST ONE NEON
TRASH CAN
IN THE ROILING MASS
OF RESPLENDENT
INTERNET KIDS,
MY HEART
FULL

Beyond any particular set, what truly signed, sealed & delivered 100% Electronicon to my eternal memory was a speech given by Skeleton Lipstick — of Lipstick Elite & Terminally Chill, among others — on the cusp of the event's afterparty. As he proclaimed across Elsewhere's hall:

"This was a sold out festival, and it was not brought to you by 'Live Nation' or any corporate sponsorship. The entire event was a huge win for kindness, art and community over cynicism, elitism and commercialism. Vaporwave can't die because it built its own death into itself, so it can't be created or destroyed, it can only grow. It's the ultimate challenger to the status quo, and thus the final boss of genres."

Having been involved with the vaporwave scene before it was even called that, Skeleton Lipstick and his subsequent DJ set solidified in me a hitherto abstract perspective on vaporwave I couldn't yet articulate. Blossoming beyond

stereotypical aesthetic tropes and a narrow view of the past or future, this scene now "curates a space for creativity." No longer must one ask "is this vaporwave?" in reference to an invisible code of stylistic conduct. Rather, vaporwave has become an infinitely elastic membrane for transmitting alternative and often subversive art forms across the internet and beyond.

Vaporwave has become a movement, and the afterparty that followed was a roaring Rorschach of its creative interpretations. From 3D Blast and Pad Channington turning the cramped Loft into a consolidated power pill of pounding vigor, to Negative Gemini and VIRTUA 94 defibrillating the party 'til dawn, the earlier organized energy of the festival became a primordial soup with which online strangers could bring their personal visions to life.

Favorite set: Skeleton Lipstick

VAPORWAVE HAS BECOME AN INFINITELY ELASTIC MEMBRANE FOR TRANSMITTING ALTERNATIVE AND OFTEN SUBVERSIVE ART FORMS ACROSS THE INTERNET AND BEYOND.

Jku Tri

Living in NYC, the first thing I thought was that I might have to put a little extra into the experience. I was meeting magazine staff for the first time *irl*, and knowing the city, had a feeling that it might be a little overwhelming for them. What I got? An insane time, and that obligation becoming a reality. The tape swap happened because the head organizer contacted me last minute and I was able to find a backup location for them, but the location was tiny, fragile, and personal.

We made it work, and it was a blast. I had to put in a lot to shoot and keep the location safe at the

same time, which cut into me showing up to the concert later than I wanted the next day.

But it's okay — I'm really new to vaporwave, and the whole experience is fun because I'm getting up to speed at a chaotic pace. There are sets I missed, but won't again because I was learning the whole time.

The staff all felt like people I wished lived here, but I'll see them again soon at ECON2.

Favorite set: death's dynamic shroud

I will forever remember the last weekend of August 2019. Electronicon, the biggest and most important vaporwave concert/one day festival/weekend of madness, ever, was one of the most profound experiences of my entire life. A global collective of thousands of people, all meeting under the same roof for the first time ever: after ten years of history and build up, it finally happened. We all have George Clanton to thank for putting on such a spectacular event, with the perfect venue choice. Elsewhere was incredibly equipped to accommodate us: with its two separate rooms and a beautiful rooftop, every fan had somewhere new to discover and another artist to look forward to catching along the way.

It felt like even though I hadn't met every person that was there before, I knew them all, existing as one giant cohesive package. An amalgam of fans, artists, labels, producers, personalities, consumers, you name it — there was something there for everyone, and it just kept getting better and more magical and romantic as the night, and weekend, went on.

The performances were absolutely incredible, even breathtaking at times, especially on the rooftop where we were treated with a skyline in the evening that was almost ethereal, and a crescent moon at night. We were in the promised land, this backdrop the perfect accompaniment to death's dynamic shroud and telepath's sets. I still have a lot of those songs and visuals stuck in my head. Saying goodbye to my dear friends was incredibly sad, but I know the experiences I shared with those that I met will have an impact on me forever. There will be no better, more meaningful concert for me for a long long time, if ever.

Favorite set: Vaperror

DAN
MASON

In the initial days of starting *Musics the Hang Up*, I saw Pad Chennington, the most well known personality in vaporwave media, as a threat to my own success. Not that I didn't think we'd get along, just that I was coming into the scene as an outsider... was there space for me? After six months of hard work, interviewing artists and becoming somewhat of a staple in the scene, we started to chat quite regularly. I was able to drop this clouded mindset and start forming a friendship.

Four days before 100% Electronicon, Pad Chennington asked me to create a Top Ten video for the vaporwave scene, as he was going on vacation after 100% Electronicon and wanted to have guests fill in for his normal release schedule. This was the first time a serious collaboration with him was presented to me and I was more than excited for the opportunity.

The finished video, *Top 10 Most Collected Vaporwave Albums of All Time*, left him more than ecstatic, commenting "I'ma give you a big ass hug at electronicon" as he was more than proud to present it to his audience. This was a monumental moment for me as not only am I now part of the Pad universe, but he wanted to meet me. So we met up at his fan gathering, I got my hug, and I was feeling stoked to see him play at the 100% Electronicon afterparty.

Just like his legacy on YouTube, he lived up to the hype and quality on his DJ set, playing his own music, マクロスMACROSS 82-99, Daft Punk and more. Being the personality he is, he knew how to control a crowd in a way no other artist did that night. From being carried on people's shoulders, joining and starting mosh pits, carrying an American flag on his back as the room chanted "USA!" and wearing his Daft Punk helmet. The energy he was able to harness that night could put him as a headliner in future 100% Electronicon events. I enjoyed every moment of it and I felt like I was really part of his community. Seeing Pad have such a large audience that passionately supports him is admiring and inspiring. It was a great set, and I was happy to take part in it.

Favorite set: hawaii94

The tape swap was so fun — meeting so many artists and hearing feedback about the magazine in person was very humbling. For the show, I had a big plan in place of everyone I'd wanted to check out, but that was tossed out the window the minute I walked in. It felt equal parts "industry event" and "concert" due to being able to meet so many artists, label heads, and superfans.

Sadly, I could barely cram myself into Zone One for anything aside from televape, and realized I needed solid food at some point during EQUIP. Everything I did see, from Dan Mason to Vaperror, was truly magical. You definitely couldn't see everything, but that's what makes it great — everyone had a different experience, and it now gives us one massive point of reference for all future conversations. I stuck around for enough afterparty to find the rest of the magazine crew and get some group photos to commemorate the first/largest gathering of the team, which was worth just as much as the flight and show ticket.

Wandering Manhattan with Indy, KITE, and Porter Vong (and randomly encountering some magazine patrons!) rounded out an unforgettable weekend. I'm also glad I brought the Instax along — both magazine staff and random attendees were happy to receive these tiny irreplaceable analog keepsakes.

I've been to many music festivals, but this was like none other, and I attribute that to the community itself. I won't be making it to #2 in LA, but I'm confident that we'll see many more events of this scale now that we've seen how successful they can be. There are certain places on earth where you can truly feel the energy a place holds. That was Elsewhere on the night of 100% Electronicon.

Favorite set: telepath

PONYDANZA

As I said in the recap episode on the *Private Suite Podcast*, Electronicon was the greatest day in vaporwave history. From the tape swap the day before, the pre-show meetup with Pad Chennington, and of course the show itself, everything was surreal and I am still in disbelief that it actually happened.

While some of the biggest names in the genre were there, for me the highlight was not so much the music (which was obviously amazing), but

meeting everyone from the community. Whether it was someone from the PSM team, a fan of the podcast, or artists like Dan Mason and Saint Pepsi, everyone was just so stoked to meet everyone and it truly felt like a real community. It makes me so happy that I can no longer call everyone I met “internet friends,” but rather “friends.”

Favorite set: Vaperror



TELEPATH

SaintCloud

Electronicon will be known as the moment that vaporwave broke through the proverbial glass ceiling. Actually, in this case, I think breaking through a computer screen is a much better analogy. My first taste of Electronicon was simply walking to the back of the line for the venue. This was the community I had shared a passion with for years, all in their aesthetic best, and all brought together at last. As we filed through the doors of the venue, I immediately caught sight of Nmash, who was selling merch. I picked up a *Dream Sequins* minidisc and introduced myself. It was completely surreal.

After this I headed toward the sound of music blasting in a small side room. People were packed in like sardines in a tin can. I was in Zone One, watching none other than George Clanton, performing as ESPRIT. I returned to the main hall to see Dan Mason, completely pouring his heart out as he sang the vocals to some of his more recent tracks while psychedelic retro imagery danced behind him. Up next I saw Nmash, who didn't disappoint.

People could be heard shouting excitedly whenever the first few notes of one of their favorite songs began. Even more impressive was that it was his first live set ever.

Up next for me was VAPERROR, which gave me heavy rave vibes. Visuals from video games were projected behind him as he danced and mixed his music in the foreground. I was ecstatic when I scored a Mana Pool vinyl at the merch table, which he then signed for me.

This took me close to the end of the night, when I saw Saint Pepsi perform. The main hall was packed to the brim, then he took the stage. All of the classics reverberated throughout the hall, mingled with people singing along and chants of “Pepsi! Pepsi!” Complete strangers were dancing with each other. Light danced around the room and took on a 3D effect; almost as if the light itself was physical matter. It was the perfect end to a perfect night.

Favorite set: Dan Mason

sheep

Outcasts and black sheep often yearn for a place where they feel their quirkiness doesn't need to be sacrificed. Online, I found that home in the vaporwave community. In person, I realized that this whole dream was a reality, and now, bigger goals were achievable. I never imagined the insane amount of energy we had as a collective whole.

Being there to see the legendary crystal? Iconic.

Shaking hands with people I've worked with and been influenced by alike? Life changing.

I will forever be humbled by the people I was able to meet and say hello to while I was at Electronicon. I especially want to say thank you to everyone who encouraged me to go, because like a lot of you, I was very anxious to travel alone. I always am, and suspect I always will be, however, I don't want to let it hinder me. After all, Electronicon 2 is right around the corner.

**Favorite set:
death's dynamic shroud**

Shaking hands with people I've worked with and been influenced by alike?

Life changing.

Trirar

When you don't know what you're doing here, go somewhere else. Go elsewhere. Fitting that 100% Electronicon's venue shares the same advice I needed to take.

One of the unique functions of the vaporwave scene is that we primarily exist online. We are both blessed and cursed by this fact. We can communicate instantly and intimately, yet we're separated by thousands of miles of wires. Breaking this barrier, and not in bits and pieces but all at once, was the most amazing experience. Meeting dozens of artists, producers, fans of the magazine, and my fellow staff here at Private Suite was incredible. I wanted to be awake the whole time. I wanted to not miss a thing. I wanted you to be there with me.

Live sets that stand out in particular are the death's dynamic shroud.wmv set and christtt. *I'll Try Living Like This*, the 2015 DDS classic, was my gateway drug to the rest of vapor. Their live renditions of the DDS discography was mind-blowingly good. Christtt's chopped and screwed signature internet sampling style enmeshed perfectly with a forty minute slideshow of the web's most cursed images. I was assisting at the merch table, so I experienced the music at the back of the room, peering over the heads of an ecstatic crowd. Everyone at the event wanted to be there. We were electric. We were electricity, but this time, we were real.

I would like to give a special shoutout to Kayla, Dan, Matt, Rich, Indy, Cloud, John, John, Alyx, Ian, Mike, Falcon, and more of you I can't even begin to name. Your kindness and compassion showed me that this scene not only deserves to grow, but that it certainly will.

Favorite set: christtt

Stuad^Dib (attendee)

I do not know how long I was suspended, overcome as I was with joy, but after some time the light faded, and I found myself standing back in the crowd. Engulfed in the roaring applause at telepath's finale, I felt vertiginous and stumbled, but was steadied by a firm pair of hands. It was the wizard, asking with great concern if I needed help. I mutely nodded, and as he reached into his satchel to offer me a flask of water, I embraced him. I knew that his crystal magic, fueled by telepath's jubilant sounds, had bridged a gap to some unknown place and delivered me from my anguish. Reciprocating for a moment, he soon broke off, satisfied that I was well, and we both turned to face the stage, adding to the din with our own adulations.

Augnos (attendee, now staff)

The only way to describe Electronicon can be summed up in one word: surreal. Meeting a long time internet friend in person for the first time is already a pretty strange experience. But to meet an entire community is beyond mind-blowing! Having been a part of vaporwave Twitter for a short year and a half, it was an almost dream-like experience to meet face-to-face with so many people you've only ever known through display pictures and obscure usernames. Artists and personalities were like celebrities to our own niche group on the internet, and the amount of love and kindness shared throughout the venue was immeasurable.

Metaprise Applications (attendee)

If there is one thing that is almost certainly indisputable, it is the significance of the year 2019 for vaporwave. Not only does it mark the unofficial celebration of vaporwave's tenth birthday, but also a turning point for the spirit of the community as vaporwave has experienced its first major offline event in 100% Electronicon. The disagreements online about what is or isn't vaporwave and what all of it means will continue, but for those experiencing the post-CON fever that has invigorated a fresh sense of passion and solidarity for a generation of fans, friends, and artists: those disagreements don't seem to matter anymore.

effectuate (PSM premium patron)

On Sunday morning, arriving back safely to my Long Island once-what-I-would-call-home, 5:00 am with a dim blue sky murmuring through my childhood bedroom, sitting at the edge of a bed unfamiliar to me, I took a moment to savor the new treasure of these memories — of knowing I was present for the cusp of something so much more significant than what we can grasp for vaporwave. How long do I need to live on the edge of anxiety, for fear of knowing this might be the peak of "offline experience" for the scene? My face hurt from smiling so frequently and so sincerely; when will this kind of day shared amongst new friends come again?

DOCUMENTING THE MAKING OF A

Darkvapor ALBUM

August 6th, 2019 began the journey of documenting the creation of the 12th album by vaporwave producer Roo. It was to be from the moment we decided the project was a go, before any conceptualizations of what the record would look or sound like. First, the blog was born. A place for Roo to notate and exhibit each idea he has along the way, which is still ongoing. You can follow along, here: <https://darkvapor.rrrxrrrxrr.com>. For your reading accompaniment, you can listen to some of the music he's created so far here:

What's extremely intriguing and interesting about Roo is his process of creation. You can listen to him talk about it on the Private Suite Podcast interview here, where he explains that he always envisions and develops the album artwork and theme first, before anything else.



Indie ADVANTAGE
WRITER



Roo doesn't stop there; his next post on the blog showcases the jcards he printed for the record's cassettes, which he uses as further inspiration in creating the album's sound. In his blog post for the jcards he explains:

"first run of jcard labels from the colorway i chose are complete. when i was working on my very first tape, i stopped and took some time to develop a fast, repeatable process – a template with tested measurements and a particular workflow on my computer that allows me to develop jcards quickly and get them printed within a few hours of my idea. the faster i can get something physical in my hands, the quicker i know if it is going to work or not. i have definitely thrown away a lot of potential releases because they just did not feel right. you have to edit yourself. this one felt good. now i have to find the right tape shells and norelco cases to complete the idea.

i usually will not know the right tape or color combination until i have seen it. i keep bins and bins full of different tape materials, colors, lengths, and case options so i can play around – usually what ends up becoming the release was something that i would not have planned beforehand. an odd color combination that works when i see it, or something else unusual – the eventual emergence of the design, rather than executing a concrete plan, is what gives it power.

this tape actually took a long time to figure out – i spent a whole night trying different combinations. i wanted it to look dark, but also inviting. like you had to pick it up and look at it. it had to beckon you. i think i have achieved it."

the eventual emergence of the design, rather than executing a concrete plan, is what gives it power.

The art and tapes are complete — now comes the sound. In his post titled “tunneling,” you can peer into Roo’s mind and thought process, exclaiming about moody journeys into darkness, and seeing a pattern in himself if not releasing such things — not “tunneling deep enough without being pushed back up again.” Going with lighter moods as a result, and now trying to burrow deeper for this album, entertaining whether it will sound like anything familiar to him. To me, having this transparency between the production process and the end result, peering into the mind of the producer and witnessing the internal debates and philosophical quandaries, is exhilarating. As an example, in the post “styles,” Roo ruminates over the concept of a dungeon synth, energywave/power ambient sound, and the notion of weaving these sounds through chorus and lyrical structures, using spacey drums and reverb to space things out and project those vapor elements.



I love his next post — another philosophical brain-buster. Daydreaming about album identities and entertaining the idea of creating multiple identities for a record. What would be the reaction and experience of a listener if he were to write an album and complete it, then produce another album with completely different instruments and sounds, but keep the notes and timing the exact same? Certainly an interesting experiment. Additionally, how does album art affect the experience of the music to a listener? What

if he were to take this dark vapor album and replace the album art and cassette/case coloring with a coconut white label, using a bright rainbow theme instead?

I realized that I had mentioned the working name of the album, ryōiki, to Indy, but never really spoke about it previously. commonly abbreviated as Nihon Ryōiki, which means “Ghostly Strange Records from Japan,” the full title is Nihonkoku Genpō Zen’aku Ryōiki (日本現報書類叢記). It may also be read as Nihon Reiiki.

I had the concept for the album first, and then found this — it exemplifies my original intention. I always give my albums codenames, so that when I’m working my folders can simply be ‘ryōiki’ or something simple. consequently, sometimes I refer to my albums by names that no one else has ever heard.’



If you're into cassettes, you may be familiar with the Nakamichi BX-1 and BX-2 cassette decks. These are the two decks that Roo dubs all of his tapes on currently — follow him on twitter @ryokan for more!

In his post "decks", he talks about experimenting with different cassette decks to get different sounds from Sonys to Integras and more, and some of the difficulty that comes with the job. Incorrect servicing of the machines by repair shops, improper calibration making the recordings too fast, or using the wrong belt sizes, and more. Eventually, he lands on the idea that the Sony decks may produce the best sound to match and compliment the theme of this record, ryoiki.

"working off the first track, i came to realize that the vaporwave chop and screw style, combined with a dark ambient style, can portray a very realistic feeling of being disoriented and lost — sudden but cohesive changes in the music made me feel like i was teleporting between several different rooms of music. but it still felt like the same track. this is very exciting, and i think this was the last piece to the concept of the music itself. i will continue on with the rest of the album now."

The music itself is incredible. Quite spooky in the way it influences the imagery in the mind — for me, it was the sound I imagine hearing when a powerful eternal spirit of light and darkness, carrying me through a vast cascading empty plane, with shimmering light particles scintillating along from a single source in the sky, and it's getting closer. It's also raining, and I forgot my umbrella. It's the soundtrack my mind conjures when reading the novel *Dune*. There are beings out there, I can hear them...

Communicating? About me? Is this their first time encountering us? Either way, I think Roo succeeded in his quest for darkness.

It's dystopian broken transmission with a sick beat, a grimy haze of electronic drones in a static-riddled eternity of dark, but beautiful ambience.

The album is still in production as we speak, and blog posts continue to land at <https://darkvaporrrrxrrr.com>. Check the page out to continue the journey started here in *Private Suite*, and definitely dive into Roo's other albums.

Through a Vapor Lens:

HAUNTING HALLS AND BACKROOMS

By my own book
WRITER

Hallways are arguably the most utilitarian architectural feature, designed solely to connect rooms to one another and provide a pathway to get from place to place. Homes, apartments, office buildings, schools; hallways are everywhere. You've probably been inside a hallway today. But you probably didn't give it a second thought. Or did you?

Hallways are creepy. They just are. Hear me out. Even if you haven't considered it previously, you might be aware of it on a subconscious level. Now that we're fully in Halloween season, it's time to give the creepiness of corridors a little more thought.

There's a reason long hallways are featured heavily in horror movies, and that they're often used for increasing the tension. There's no telling what'll come out of the doors on either side, or what lurks at the end of a particularly long hall, dark except for the occasional flicker of ancient fluorescent lights.

HALLWAY

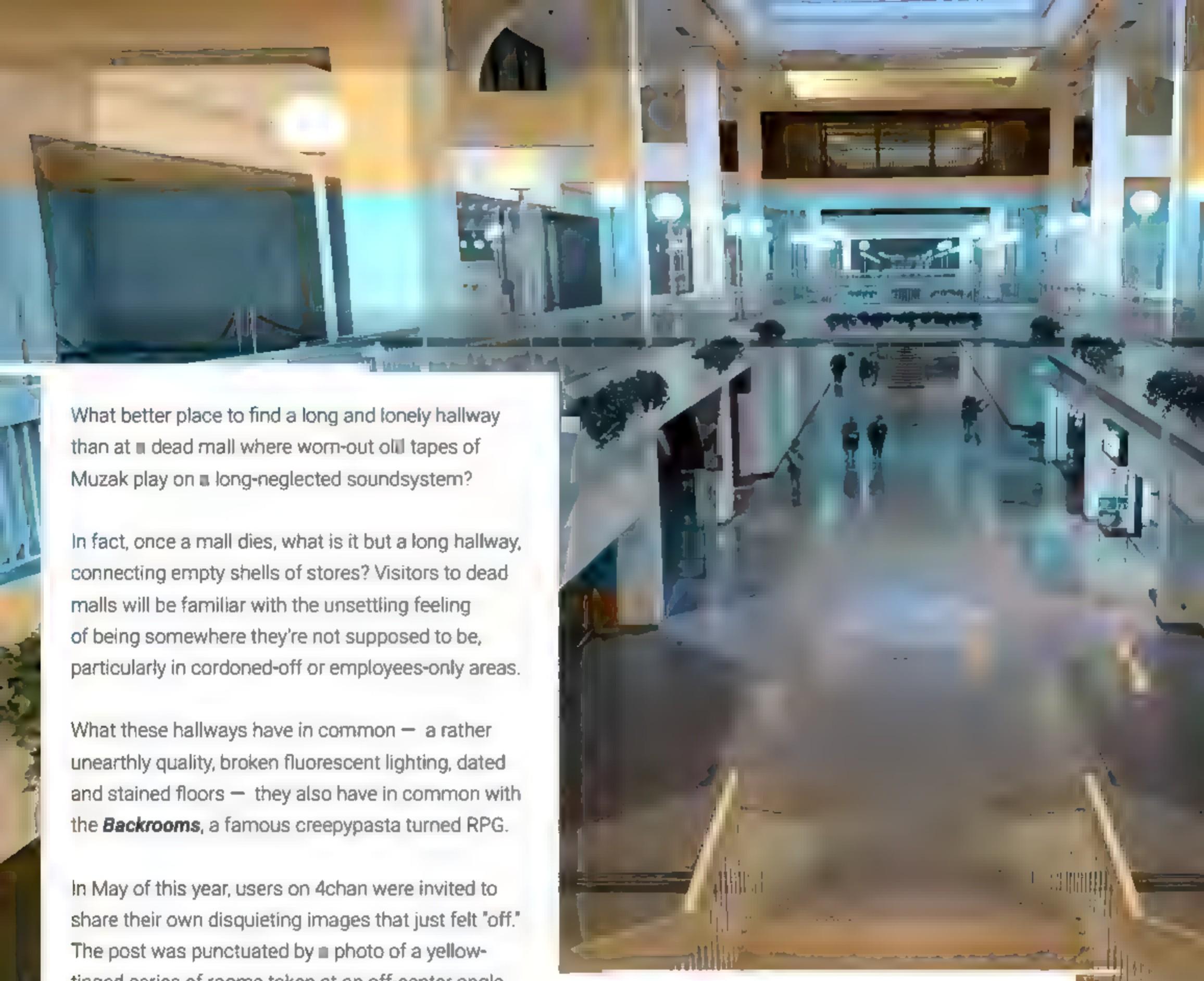
Hallways often crop up in our dreams, too. According to *Dream Bible*, "dreaming of being in a hallway may reflect transitions in waking life that are uncertain, difficult, scary, or dangerous."

It also takes shape as bathophobia, or the fear of depths. Long hallways stand beside caves, dark water and quicksand in the minds of those who have this phobia. I'll go ahead and venture a guess that many people have this phobia without even being aware of it. As in the dream interpretation, a fear of the unknown is common to human beings.

In the legendarily horrifying cult classic novel **House of Leaves**, author Mark Z. Danielewski transports the reader to an unsettling world where a house is larger on the inside than it is on

the outside, and where the residents discover a new hallway that continues to grow and eventually turns into an infinite labyrinth. The title of the chapter "The Five-and-a-Half Minute Hallway" is enough to send a chill down the spine of those who've read the book that wish they hadn't.

When you give the humble hallway a closer look, you'll find it also fits pretty well into the vaporwave aesthetic.



What better place to find a long and lonely hallway than at a dead mall where worn-out old tapes of Muzak play on a long-neglected soundsystem?

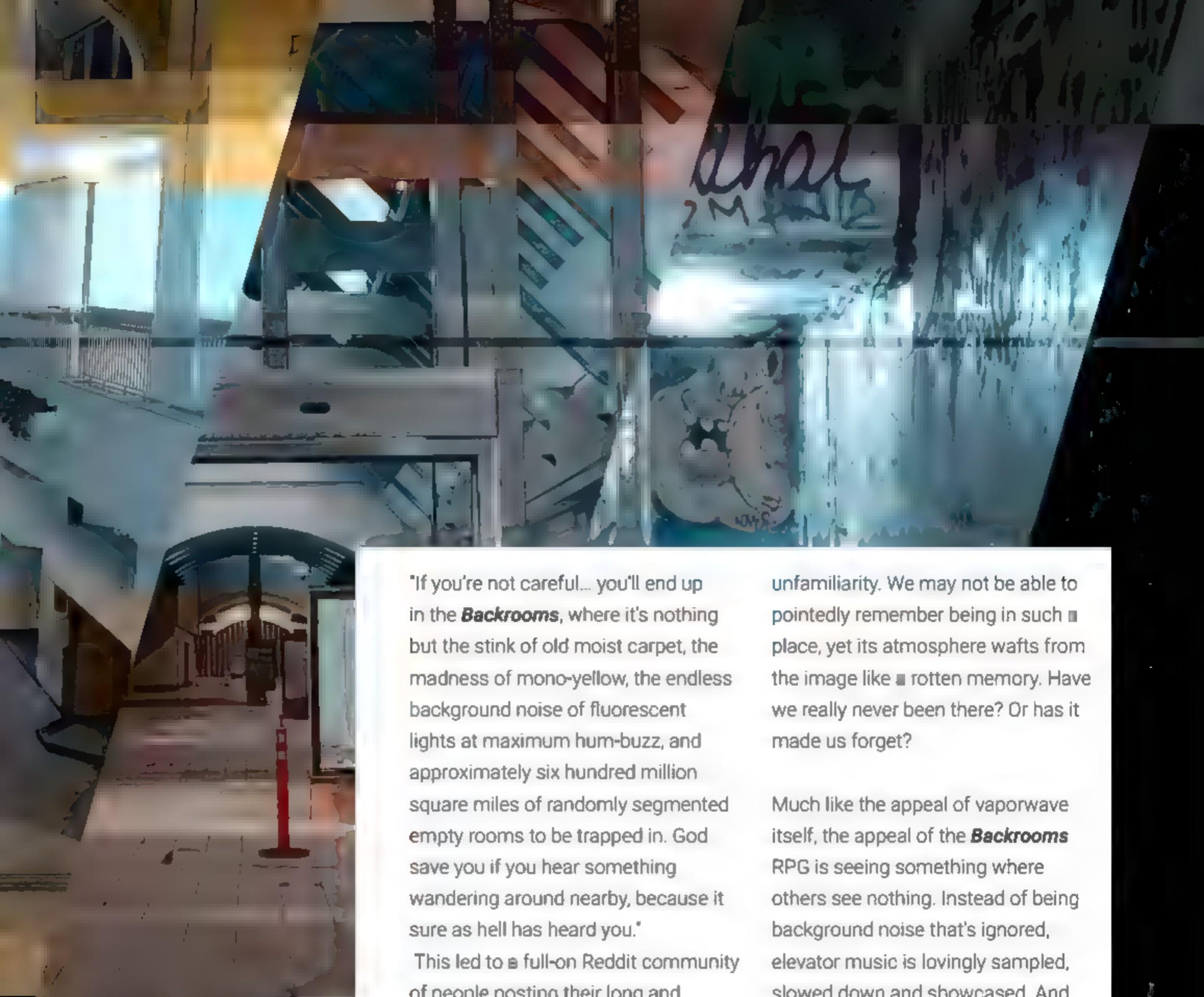
In fact, once a mall dies, what is it but a long hallway, connecting empty shells of stores? Visitors to dead malls will be familiar with the unsettling feeling of being somewhere they're not supposed to be, particularly in cordoned-off or employees-only areas.

What these hallways have in common — a rather unearthly quality, broken fluorescent lighting, dated and stained floors — they also have in common with the *Backrooms*, a famous creepypasta turned RPG.

In May of this year, users on 4chan were invited to share their own disquieting images that just felt "off." The post was punctuated by a photo of a yellow-tinged series of rooms taken at an off-center angle, and this comment:

It's atmosphere wafts from the image like a rotten memory.
Have we really never been there?

Or has it made us forget?



"If you're not careful... you'll end up in the **Backrooms**, where it's nothing but the stink of old moist carpet, the madness of mono-yellow, the endless background noise of fluorescent lights at maximum hum-buzz, and approximately six hundred million square miles of randomly segmented empty rooms to be trapped in. God save you if you hear something wandering around nearby, because it sure as hell has heard you."

This led to a full-on Reddit community of people posting their long and haunting hallway photos, many of them taken in dead malls and with an undeniable '80s and '90s aesthetic. Images of dim offices and parking garages also crop up fairly often, so evocative that you can practically hear the echoing of your own feet. The original image of the **Backrooms**, in particular, has achieved cult significance for its familiar

unfamiliarity. We may not be able to pointedly remember being in such a place, yet its atmosphere wafts from the image like a rotten memory. Have we really never been there? Or has it made us forget?

Much like the appeal of vaporwave itself, the appeal of the **Backrooms** RPG is seeing something where others see nothing. Instead of being background noise that's ignored, elevator music is lovingly sampled, slowed down and showcased. And instead of just being a way to get from point A to point B, a hallway becomes a destination for a nightmare or at the very least, an adventure.

Either way, keep your wits about you and your eyes peeled. Who knows what's waiting at the end of the hallway?



From the an Interview with **Zer0** ゼロ

Belgium's biggest vaporwave artist is having his biggest year in 2019. I chatted with him for a bit regarding the new album, live shows, and what the future holds.

maki
WRITER

PS: So, let's start right off with Hellveterra. Is being the first artist signed to Hiraeth Records as big a deal as I think it is? How do you feel about it?

I think it is a big deal! At least it is for me, personally. I feel incredibly honored and proud. Jornt (猫 シ Corp.) has been a huge inspiration for me as an artist and being able to work so closely with him has been absolutely delightful.



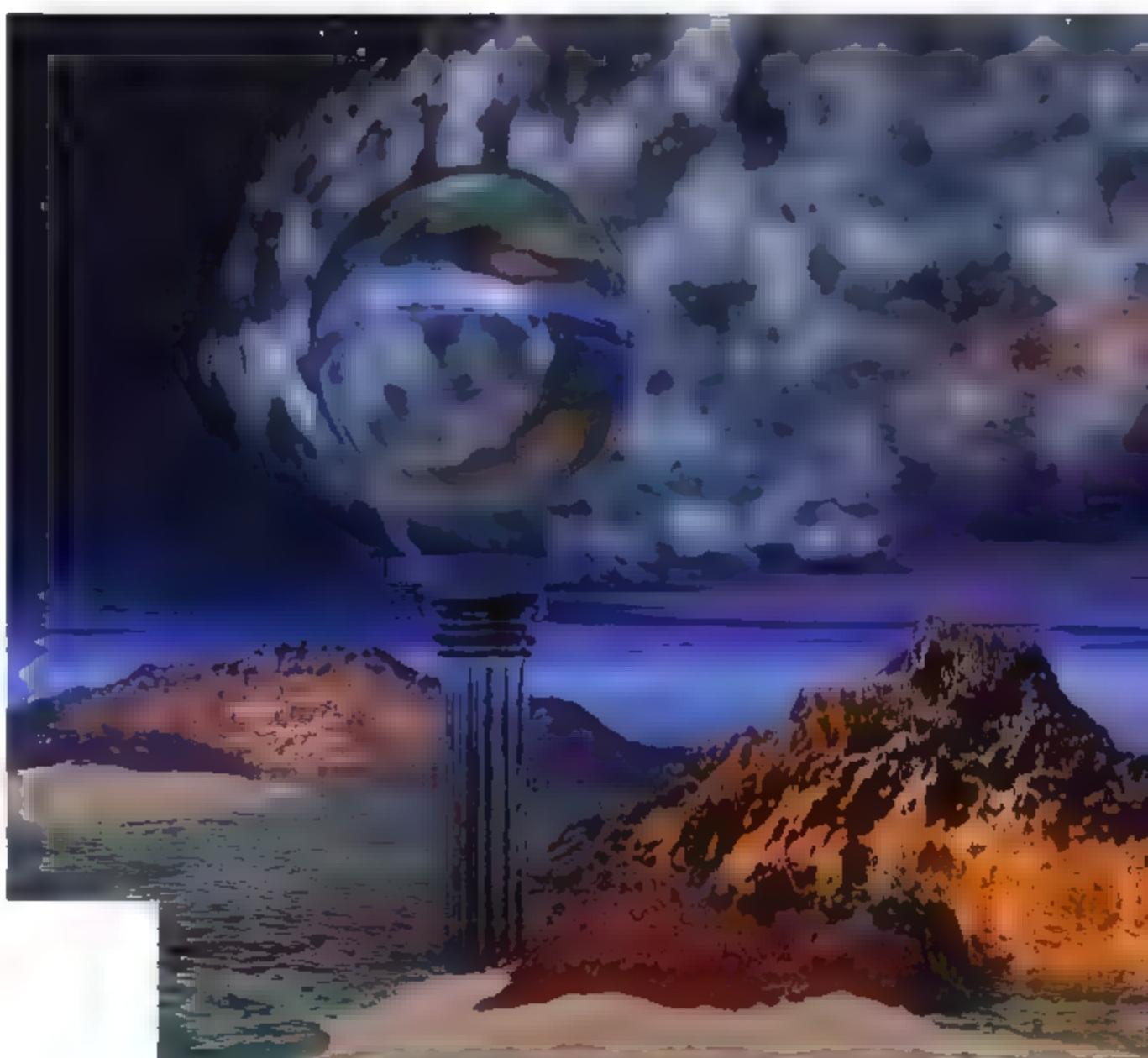
PS: How did that come about? Did you have the album completed and then shop it, did you approach him with the idea before working on the album, or did he approach you?

I mailed Jornt initially to pester him to listen to my Holloway Tapes album, *Blank Slate Reflection*, as that was heavily influenced by his work on *Palm Mall*. Somewhere in that initial conversation we switched to our common language and began talking more casually, and then he dropped a huge bomb: we already met! Aeons ago, in the pre-vaporwave days he saw me perform at a noise show in the Netherlands, gleefully bashing my face in with a microphone as "Crucifix Eye." Eventually I ended up mailing him to get his opinion on some of my works in progress. At that point *Hellveterra* was a lot more rough around the edges and actually had vocals on certain parts. He really connected with the album, guiding me in some of the decisions of where to take the album until eventually coming forward that he was interested in officially signing me on. In hindsight he was already scoping me out way before, immediately asking very specific questions about my production style and sample usage when he first listened to my music.

PS: Nice! It's interesting you note that Jornt was paying attention to you prior to that chat. You mentioned in the podcast that you've got a background in audio engineering, too, which I think is especially evident in both *Black Magic* and *Hellveterra*. An engineer's ear allows for a bit of polish that you might not find everywhere.

You also mentioned that *Black Magic* was a score for the Shirow anime of the same name. Was there anything similar in mind when making *Hellveterra*?

Yes and no. *Black Magic* was specifically composed on top of the anime in question, an alternate score that syncs up exactly with the pacing and mood of the movie. For *Hellveterra* I had a strong vision for both the sound design and atmosphere, but it was substantially more fluid. Visually I was called to a post-human landscape with elements of decaying factories and technology combined with the grandiosity of nature taking it back. In terms of audio I wanted to bridge the gap between dark ambient, mallsoft and dungeon synth. I like to think I somewhat managed to turn this into a cohesive vision in both the album art and album itself.



PS: What you mention is exactly what I pictured when listening to the album. The name itself, seems a combination of "Hell" and "terra" (Latin for earth, for those who don't know), which I assumed was intentional. When I listened to it, I had some very distinct thoughts. One, that it was composed as a score for something, given that there are definitely recurring motifs just as you'd see in film ("Silica Animus" and "Gwaihir" hold elements similar to "Void Dragon," and "Huzhang" & "Acheron" definitely feel like companion pieces); and two (this could be just me), how it fits into the Hiraeth family. Obviously we are only three albums in, but Building a Better World, both in art and sound, was very inviting, bright. The second album was like exploring this new world's natural environment. This third album, now, is like you've come from the future, to show what has happened (or could happen) to that world...

You absolutely nailed the larger part of where the name comes from. There's also a reference there to Helvete, the record shop that was a key spot for the development of black metal, which the album also takes heavy influences from. Terra being also a popular way to refer to the world in Japanese RPGs also helped. Well spotted! And yes there's loads of recurring motifs, lots of mangling, chopping and re-introducing of classic metal chords and elements. In the end my albums are always made as one whole before being chopped up into tracks at the very end of the process. I'm sure this has a basis in being restricted by physical gear in my previous projects, and trying to artificially recreate those restrictions in a more digital workspace by keeping the same synths and instruments throughout the album. And it's not just you! Jørn explicitly mentioned he has Hellveterra as a next step beyond the *Palm Mall* storyline in his head. Where *Palm Mall* was on Earth and *Palm Mall* Mars expands this beyond the stars, Hellveterra gives a glimpse into a darker timeline where this all went wrong and we end up in the decaying remains many decades into the future. A final musical hurrah from the last robotic denizens of *Palm Mall*.

PS: I'm glad you mention Helvete – I'm unaware of the shop myself, but definitely familiar with black metal. As I talk with more folks in the vapor scene, I find many of them have been involved with metal or noise music. Why do you think that is?

I'm convinced that a lot of people are drawn to (extreme) metal and genres such as noise or ambient in an attempt to genuinely try and push genre boundaries and limits. With both metal and noise becoming increasingly codified and safe, with little room for innovation or experimentation, these people go looking elsewhere. There's very few new musical movements that survive the initial few months, but vaporwave is proving to be one of the exceptions. It's a brave new frontier where new music history is being written as we speak. I think that's what'll keep attracting people from these scenes and beyond. The fact that the scene is also decentralised, anonymous and almost entirely online makes it an easier transition. I like to think we're also a very welcoming and supportive bunch.

Hellveterra gives a glimpse into a darker timeline where this all went wrong and we end up in the decaying remains many decades into the future.

PS: Just don't tell folks to start with r/vaporwave, right? I joke, there are some good starting points there. But I found the same thing with the scene when I really got involved. With the democratization of music creation, the barrier to entry is so low and vaporwave is a loose enough term that it allows for so much experimentation/expression. I think people can forget that the art is just as important as the music, too. Speaking of which, did you make the album art for Hellveterra?

Ooh, yeah, the subreddit's a whole different can of worms, haha. Not all bad though, mind you. Yes, I did make the art myself! Without a doubt the most complex piece I've made thus far. It's a combination of about ■ dozen different layering techniques with glitches and "borrowed" sprite art.



PS: I think it's great, and captures the feel of the album. A bit different from the renders you've been sharing on Instagram lately. How did all of that come about?

Up until a year or so ago I had never worked with 3D design software whatsoever. Then, in the process of moving, and in a fit of absolute hubris we decided to design some of the shelves and cupboards ourselves. That's ■ couple hundred hours of my life I'm not getting back. Then after seeing some cover designs that had a distinctive retro CGI feel – I think Oasys is one of the most iconic ones – I decided to just straight up ask them what they were using and then the floodgates opened... What also helped is that, with three albums pending release, I really had to distract myself from making more music.

PS: Yeah, I think a number of folks have compared your renders to Myst and Riven. The FM Skyline homage was pretty well received too. Has this led to others asking you to make pieces for them?

Yes my style in renders owes a lot to early PC games and CGI. I have fond memories of standing in the local computer store looking at their huge wall of games in their big boxes, often with rendered art that had nothing to do with the game's graphics. I still get nostalgic when I look at promo artwork for the original Red Alert and Planescape Torment, 2 of my favorite old school PC games, that heavily used this style in cutscenes and promos. Thus far I've somewhat held off on doing work for others unless as a personal favour and on my own terms. If I were to ask a "correct" price based on the amount of hours spent working on each piece they'd be prohibitively expensive, and considering I'm still heavily learning it's not something I feel super comfortable with. That being said, if people are interested in using one of my existing works I'm always down to have a chat.

PS: And wait, you have two more albums on deck?

Yes, you heard correctly! Aside from Hellveterra I've got two more tapes in the works for this year. One being the collab with Jade, which was teased on the subreddit a while back, and the other being ■ followup to my 2018 Seikomart tape 激しい憎しみ. Last one's not picked up by a label thus far and is ■ series of minimalistic new age guitar-driven reinterpretations of hip-hop classics for which I've only teased artwork and one track.

PS: I look forward to hearing those! Mind sharing any of the hip-hop classics you selected?

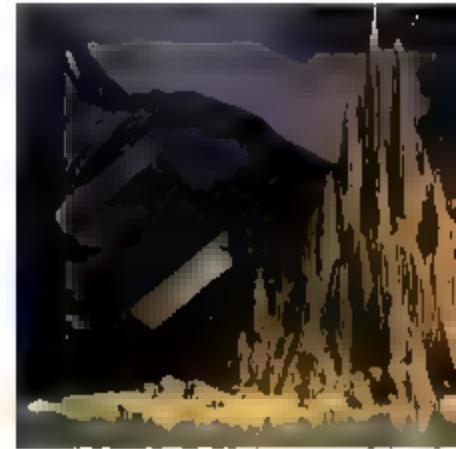
Oh they're much less interesting classics, and rather the most obvious ones I could lay my hands on for the production process. I think it'll be more fun to have everyone guess once the album's out!

PS: Always good to keep a couple secrets. Earlier you mentioned your creative process being restricted by physical gear. Do you think this has helped you when doing live shows?

I'm convinced it's always interesting to stay grounded in some way when creating, especially when working digitally. When the entire world's at your fingertips it's easy to lose your focus and deliver something messy. With my previous projects I always found a lot of pleasure in pushing the little gear I had to its absolute limits and I guess that's still what I'm doing but just in a different way. Keeping a limit on the amount of instruments in an album does indeed really help for liveshows. On a base level everything I perform is distinctively triggered and manipulated live on the spot. That's a point of pride as well, and these limitations keep that possible.

PS: I definitely agree, it always seems the most interesting art is created with constraints (whether situational or self-imposed). Where vaporwave is now, it seems that live shows are the next step in the evolution of the scene. You've done a fair number of shows, right? Would you care to share your gear/setup?

I've done about a dozen or so shows now, yeah! The core of my live setup is my Laptop with Ableton Live's session view, which I control with 2 Novation Launchpads that have the grids linked together. That way I can control all the different parts and instruments in my tracks on the fly and manually transition through tracks. Aside from that I usually have my projector for some mood-setting visuals and the obligatory audio interface and cables. Oh and the mask of course! That's become a bit of a signature.



PS: Is that a dozen shows just as Zer0 れい, or does that include Crucifix Eye and/or other projects?

To date I've performed 13 times as Zer0 れい and probably 20 or so times under different names throughout the years.

PS: I remember on the podcast you mentioned making the mask! Between that, and the cabinets in your apartment, sounds like you're pretty handy. Any other projects going on?

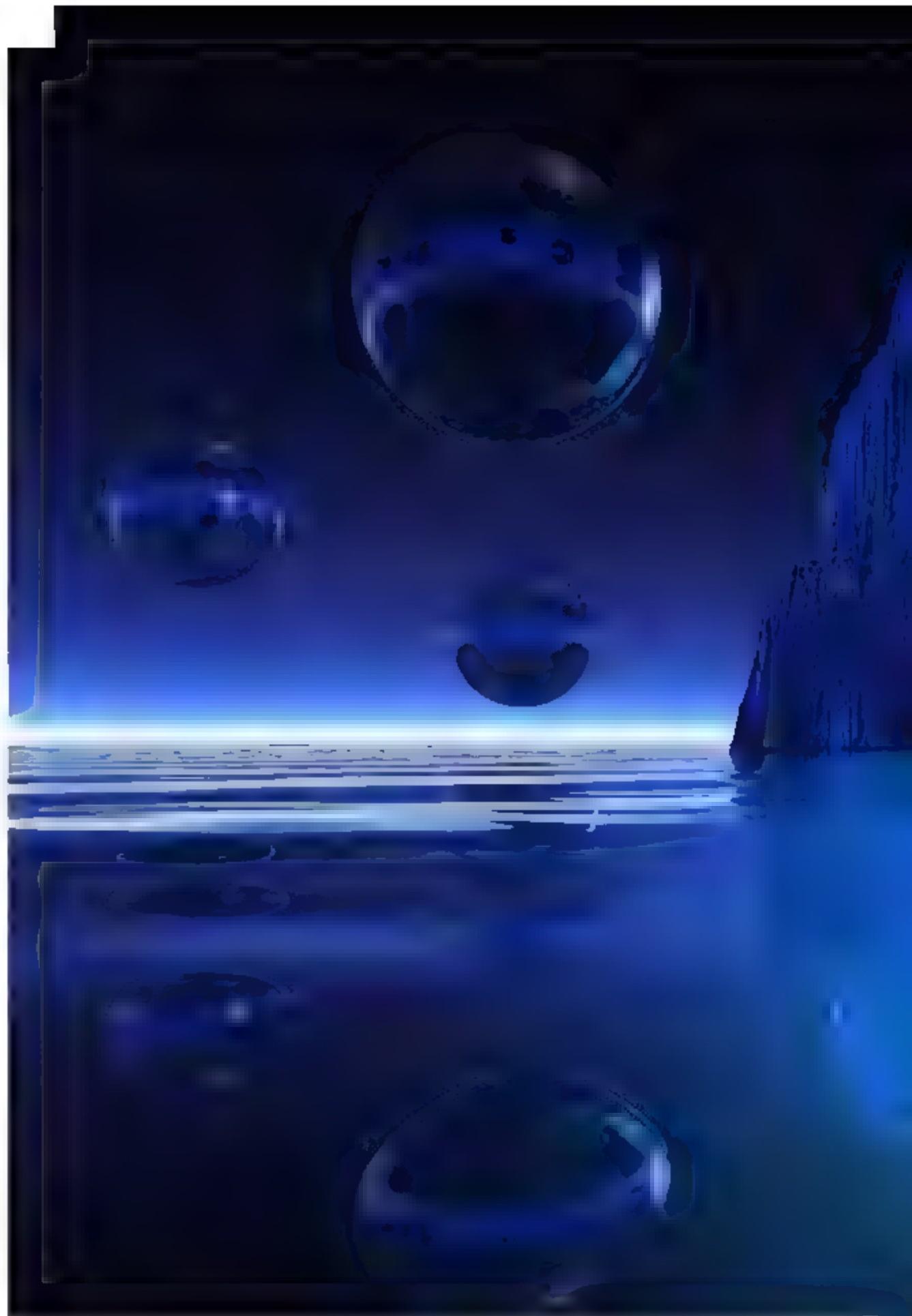
I wouldn't typically describe myself as handy but I'm very driven once I start something. That goes for my music, 3D renders, liveshows, the venue I run, etc. I'll be the first to admit that this is highly selective, so you won't see me doing the dishes with any such enthusiasm. I'm at no risk of being bored any time soon, that's for sure.

PS: How is everything going with the venue? I don't know that I've heard much about it. Do you get a variety of acts, or is it scene-specific?

It's a place with a very long and storied history, and I'm just the latest link in a chain of volunteer/unpaid staff that goes all the way back to the late '80s. It's mainly dedicated to "underground" DIY music. This in practice boils down to loud and weird guitar music ranging from blues through garage rock and punk to the stranger sides of metal, with the odd bit of noise and ambient thrown in. It's a great place to broaden your horizons, meet some really interesting people on tour and in my case it also helped me build a whole lot of live sound engineer experience.

PS: Hearing it on stage versus in the crowd versus back-of-house are all so different, you really need three sets of ears. Sounds like a fun place. Anything special planned there for your album release, or any other vapor-related stuff?

I'm still slowly warming them up to what the vaporwave scene is all about, and try not to take my position as staff for granted. Currently I've performed there once as support for an ambient act that was on tour, which I thought was fitting. That'll probably be enough for this year.



"I have fond memories of standing in the local computer store looking at their huge wall of games in their big boxes, often with rendered art that had nothing to do with the game's graphics."



PS: So, overall it looks like 2019 has been a pretty prolific year. Planning on taking any breaks?

Not any time soon, it seems. We'll be well into next year if I just wrap up everything I have going on already. I'm bound to have a creative spark and start work on another album somewhere along the way. Also I'm just having way too much fun, both in creating music and interacting with the community, why would I even want a break from that?

PS: I can definitely say you're an asset to r/vaporwave and the Private Suite server! Positivity goes a long way, both in the scene and in life in general. Before we go, anything else you want to share with our readers?

You're much too nice! Honestly, I love this scene so much and am proud and honored to be a part of it. It is absolutely crawling with creative, kind-hearted and extremely talented people. Thank you all for the kindness you've shown me in the past years and I'll try my darndest to return the favor.

Helvettira is out now on Hiraeth Records.

Zer0 れい can be found on twitter, Instagram, and bandcamp.

All artwork featured are original renders by Zer0 れい; prints can be found for sale in his recently-minted teespring shop.

Feel free to come chat with him, along with other artists and staff members, in the Private Suite Discord!



INTERFACED with **u m a m i**



For an artist, growing up with the Internet at your fingertips presents endless possibilities. The ability to create content and show it off to the masses is not only a challenge, but a game in which the reward can be anything from your own meme — forever immortalizing your spot on the world wide web — or what could be easily regarded as a cult classic, in the case of online animator Justin Tomchuk, otherwise known as u m a m i.

Most users unfamiliar with u m a m i's *Interface* series — an ongoing narrative about static-filled creatures and technoesotericism — may be more familiar with him via some of his famous shorts, like *Thomas the Thermonuclear Bomb* or *McDrivin'*, in which a glitchy, hastily painted Ronald McDonald spends one minute, forty-four seconds driving into a slowly progressing sunset to a haunting, dream-like beat. As the rubber burns, and as Ronald approaches that ever-setting sun, it becomes a giant cheeseburger, and then suddenly the video ends with no resolution. The next two shorts in the series, *McFeels* and *McFelon* also feature a unique surrealist style that helps to cement Tomchuk's footprint not only within content creation, but on the Internet itself.

deliriously...daniel
WRITER

sheep
WRITER



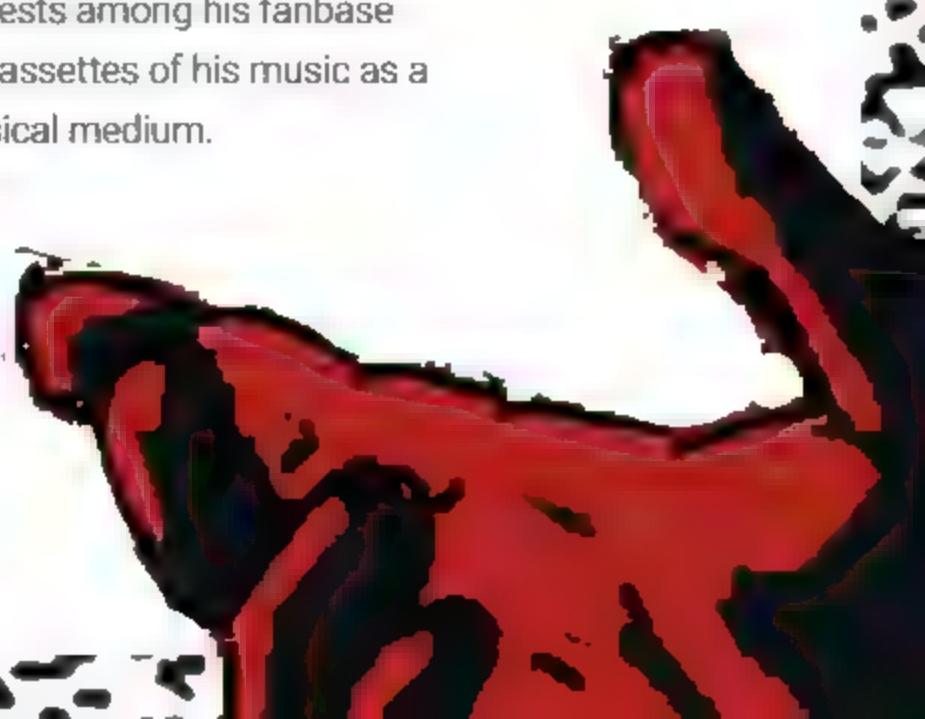
Before the Internet, however, there was a child whose interest in animation began with stop-motion LEGO creations. When it came time to think of the future, Tomchuk attended an art school where he spent time getting into painting and narrative filmmaking. From there, the interest blossomed into documentaries. It wasn't until 2017 that u m a m i would loop back around to animations, beginning to feature them on his YouTube channel.

Growing presence online has a lot to do with relatability and building a community on the platform on which you operate. With the utilization of memes

and popular culture icons such as Mark Zuckerberg (featured in various shorts such as *VR Talk with Mark Zuckerberg*), Tomchuk was able to do just that, to which he credits some of his success as an animator. He also considers his ability to maintain creative control over his works as another aspect of his success — barring the exception of a few songs, everything on Tomchuk's channel is his creation. Even the music, which he also started by making tracks for his LEGO animations.

Releasing music as HEXSYSTEM, Tomchuk credits his musical inspiration to artists like Boards of Canada,

Jesper Kyd, and LORN, and genres like noise and ambient. Tomchuk's sound can be described as dreamy, dark, and even low fidelity. There is a majestic oppression to be found in the *Interface Vol. 1* soundtrack, which released on CD and vinyl earlier this year. Though unfamiliar with vaporwave and its obsession with analogue, Tomchuk reveals there have been requests among his fanbase for cassettes of his music as a physical medium.



So, where does his sound fit in amongst the umbrella genre of vaporwave? Think of it as dark vapor, with an experimental, lo-fi twist that cunningly flirts with dream music and post-internet deliciousness. His distinct sound coupled with his surrealist visuals coalesce into the behemoth that is the *Interface* series, which radiates vapor-adjacent vibes like ■ necrotic mist.

Music is so central to this theming that, when it comes to approaching *Interface*, Tomchuk confesses that he usually starts with the backing track for the episode, and that most of the illustrating falls into place around the sound, which helps to keep the experience in tune with what the viewer hears. In Tomchuk's plot-building process for *Interface*, there is minimal note making — most of the storyline is locked in broad strokes within the artist's brain, and like *Interface*'s star character Mischief, the narrative is ever-morphing. Tomchuk puts his emphasis on doing what he feels right, which plays into ■ lot of the choices he makes with the series as an artist. Why is Mischief pink? Because it felt right. Why does he go for the creepy overtones? Because they feel right. Part of being an artist is understanding your method and when to listen to your gut — which might be why watching the series feels like an invigorating punch to the gut.

So what is the series all about? If we knew, we'd tell you.

While going into *Interface* totally blind may leave you with the pleasant tingle of ■ cerebral short circuit, here's the premise in short: ■ silent man meets a clownish pink monster. Together, they hope to unravel ■ menacing mystery involving otherworldly forces, an artificial deity, and bodily transcendence.

It is these characters who either drive the story or are driven by it. Private Suite Magazine spoke with Tomchuk to better get to know them. Be aware, there may be mild spoilers below for those seeking to watch *Interface* with a truly open mind.

THE YEAR WAS 1943...

Though *Interface* itself is a dazzling, often pleasantly disorienting kaleidoscope of immolated imagination, it nevertheless feels like ■ character-driven odyssey. Central to Tomchuk's warbling tale is the dynamic between Mischief, a transcended human turned shapeshifting pink... something, and Henryk "Blue Guy" Niebieski, a mute photographer whose appearance hides an old secret. Their pairing is expectedly unlikely — and as of yet unexplained — yet they quickly develop ■ buddy-coppish relationship in which Henryk plays the enigmatic canvas to Mischief's amorphous artistry and, of course, mischievous personality.

Ever since the catastrophic 1943 Philadelphia Experiment — a test of military cloaking devices by the U.S. Navy that real-world conspiracy theorists still reference — Mischief ■ able to freely manipulate his form into everything, from birds and sunflowers to car parts and people themselves, though Episode 14 suggests his cryptically clownish pink-itude predates this astral ascent. Through his charming "spaghettification," unstated wisdom, and infinite adaptability, Mischief both grounds and creatively frees *Interface* to be just as malleably surreal as Tomchuk desires. He is ■ character distinct in both appearance and voice, which the artist provides himself.

"Usually I start with kind of my own voice for him, which was kind of like a gravelly version of my own voice," Tomchuk says of the process. "And then pitch shift it down about 12 decibels. EQ a lot of the bass out of it, and make sure everything's mono. I add some extremely heavy compression to it and increase the high end a little bit with the EQ."

"Sometimes what I do is I read my lines slowly, and then in the computer just speed it up a little bit so that when you play it back he's a little bit easier to hear or understand. Cause the problem is his voice is so gravelly and low pitch that I get ■ lot of people saying it's hard to understand him." If it's tough to understand Mischief — both in voice and

ultimate vision (the latter is, of course, by design) — Tomchuk understandably calls him the most challenging to draw, too.

"Mischief is probably the most difficult, because he transforms into different things," he says.

"I can't just reuse all his assets cause they're different almost every episode. Like sometimes he's a car or sometimes he's a unicycle. And that sometimes means I have to redo the mouth animations. And there's like ten different versions of his mouth. He's kind of all over the place."

Tomchuk animates *Interface* primarily using Adobe PhotoShop, Illustrator, and Premiere, while the music is made in Logic or Audacity and mixed in Adobe Audition. He says the series' unique style was influenced by the *Watchmen* comics' strong colors and dark shadows, while its pixel-art graphical fidelity ended up a partial product of convenience.

"It's such a low resolution that it doesn't require a lot of computer stuff in order to do it. So like, even some of the crazy 3D shots, which would normally take hours to render, don't take very long."

Beyond *Watchmen*, *Interface*'s greatest influencer was Tomchuk himself. Both Mischief and Henryk, as well as the entirety of *Interface*, originated from a single, at first one-off comic Tomchuk made for sheer absurdism. It directly parallels the energy of *Interface*'s first two episodes, just with two key differences: Henryk speaks, and Mischief changes his colors, a choice the character explicitly defies in the series the comic inspires.

"I never really figured out, when I was drawing the comic, what was gonna happen after the fact," Tomchuk says. "But when I started episode two I just thought, well, what would he do next? I decided to plan out a few episodes and it kind of just snowballed. There wasn't really too much of a

plan: the first four or five episodes were a lot more spontaneous, it's with the later episodes now that I really do a lot more planning. I can't really give you a good answer about why I did *Interface*. I just thought I want to make something original and new."

Tomchuk teases that upcoming episodes will explore much more of Mischief's actual background story. Whether that means his pre-1943 days at Coney Island's Dreamland, or perhaps some time after, is unclear. He and Henryk continue on a journey out of Montreal, which served as Part 1's setting, to the coast, in search of Henryk's own past, which is littered with outlived family, nuclear explosions, too many cigarettes, and the strange phenomenon of cerebral electricity that has seemingly intertwined him with Mischief.



Zack Sneath / *Interface*

SECURE BENEATH THE WATCHFUL EYES

But Mischief and Henryk aren't alone in their plight, as help will be essential when facing an enemy powered by that cerebral electricity. An immaterial force that manifests as flowing television static, cerebral electricity is as mysterious as Mischief, probably because it wasn't until the Philadelphia Experiment that it "revealed itself for us to deserve," and made "ghost stories and myths no longer superstitions."

Or at least, so it is said by the CEO and evolution-pondering mastermind of Greetings Robotics, the corporation behind the Kinetic Autonomous Mechanical *Interface* known as KAMI. She — KAMI's sculpted body is female, though Tomchuk insists she is inherently genderless — is powered by cerebral electricity, hides a swirling soup of faces beneath her mask, and displays immaculate power throughout the series. Tomchuk says KAMI was another spontaneous creation, as by the time he reached Episode 3 he knew *Interface* needed an antagonist.

"I just kind of wanted someone who was the antagonist of the story, but isn't outrightly evil, even though it doesn't seem to come across that way. When you watch the web series, KAMI thinks s/he's doing the right thing."

Yet despite his serendipitously sinister creation, Tomchuk goes on to explain how KAMI's name, and by extension the series' other creatures, were inspired by the kami spirits of Shintoism. Kami are ambiguous embodiments of the universe's interconnecting energy and largely hidden from the world, depicted as anything from

figures and forces to landscape elements and qualities.

"I wanted to have a robot that ran off of the energy of those sort of deities," Tomchuk says, alluding further to several *yōkai*, or supernatural spirits from Japanese folklore. "I did some research on it, but it was just interesting how there [were] all these different characters that are kind of bizarre and they have these really peculiar things about them. They're not really evil, they're not really good either."

"But like, you can get rid of them by doing really innocent things. Like there is one of them that's supposed to be a ghost that walks behind you, and you can kind of just be polite to him and he'll walk past you," he continues, referring to Betobeto-san, a "formless specter" heralded only by the *beto beto* sound of its wooden sandals to whom a traveler need only say "After you, Betobeto-san," to escape.

"I thought it'd be cool to have a web series where there's these different little monsters. It's similar to the Shinto religion, but it's not the same. In my web series, there's all these different religions. I've got a little bit of Hinduism. I got a little bit of Christianity and Catholicism, Japanese religion. I'm going to try to work in some other ones as well, because the idea isn't so much that there's any particular religion. It's just like a cultural thing that everyone can kind of relate to a little bit. [Religion's] kind of like an innate thing that's embedded in our genetics."



"I'm not really religious myself. I'm not [an] atheist, either. But I do think that there's some part of us that connects with aspects of different religions," Tomchuk concludes on the topic. "If you've ever read about the hero's journey and all those archetypes, those are the sort of things that I try to incorporate into the *Interface* web series, and religious symbolism has a lot of that sort of stuff in it."

Tomchuk has enlisted others to help bring to life these additional "little monsters" — who, one might theorize, are the

ghost stories and myths the world has greeted since 1943. Voice actors and personalities like Philip Hersh, Christa Elliot, Phil Jamesson, The Minute Hour and Yoshi Ando have all lent their voices to the series' often-disquieting cast. Tomchuk says that Ando's character, a knife-wielding yet endearing octopus chef, hints toward a bigger theme.

"When I do create [these creatures], I want them to have some sort of aspect that relates to the human body," he says. "The chef, he kind of represents a heart. Cause if you were to look

at an octopus, it kind of resembles a heart like with the different veins. And then there's the hand character from the fourth episode, which is a hand, obviously. And then Mischief himself, well I don't want to say what he represents, but he could be different things. I refer to him as a parasite."

"So these characters, they're not just random. I mean that's an aspect of it, but there's a reason why they are, what they are. So when you look at the new characters that come out, think of it from that perspective."

Anatomical motif isn't the only thing hiding behind *Interface*'s surface. Tomchuk confirms that, beyond some more obvious details like hidden codes, there remain a few Easter eggs in the series that, to his knowledge, haven't been found. To any would-be secret hunters, he leaves this advice:

"If you notice a pattern, like a repeating pattern of a sound and a visualization, there's probably something hidden underneath there."

WHAT IS IT THAT CONSUMES YOU?

Despite Tomchuk's distance from the vaporwave community, *Interface*'s adjacency and overlap with the genre's themes of technological dystopia subsuming idealistic futures is tough to deny. Whatever its intentions, origins, or taxonomy, *Interface* succeeds at its aim of bringing a dreamy, hazy world to life in an uncannily compelling fashion.

After editing all of *Interface* Part One's episodes into a single feature, Tomchuk aims to do the same with Part Two to make *Interface* a feature-length film.

"Once I combine Part One and Part Two, I think there's going to be a conclusion to the story that I want to say," he says. "I don't want it to just go on forever without any plan. But that doesn't necessarily mean it's the end of the *Interface* web series. Maybe it will be, maybe we'll continue on. I think what will happen is it probably will end after Part Two and then I'll continue. Maybe I'll use the same characters, but it will be called something else. It will be about something different."

No matter what happens to Mischief, Henryk and KAMI, *Interface* has no-doubt made an impression on Internet surrealism, while leaving viewers, like its protagonists, searching for answers — in whatever pink form they may decide to take.



THE WITCH HOUSE COMETH

WAVES OF THE OCCULT

*Double, double, toil and trouble;
Sample chopped and treble muddled.*

sheep
WRITER

doktorb
WRITER

"Chopped and screwed." It comes up quite often when searching vaporwave on the Internet hivemind. Pioneered in the '90s by DJ Screw, the style relied on the intense slowing down and experimentation of songs, hip hop in particular, to give the genre its unique sound. It's a familiar method to the vaporwave musician. Yet, the reach didn't stop there, and it most certainly didn't start there either. Around the same time as the conception of vaporwave, witch house also began to emerge out of the late 2000s explosion of post internet music and aesthetic experimentation that also gave rise to seapunk. Looking back, this period in history felt like some kind of golden years for internet culture. This was a peculiar time, a period of intense creative innovation; an artistic search for a new way of being in the virtual backrooms of a world that was struggling to come to terms with itself and heal as it emerged slowly from the shadows of the Global Financial Crisis. I think back on this brief moment in cyberculture as a period of urgent hopefulness; there was an energy that flowed during these times that made it feel as though anything was possible.

And out of this momentum witch house manifested itself with, much like vaporwave, very uncertain origins. Back in its early days the sound we'd now recognise as witch house went by many names: drag, haunted house, grave wave and probably most unfortunately rape gaze, a genre tag that was eventually denounced by all those who had associated with it. The genre's eventual stabilisation under witch house bears a resemblance to the Vaporwave 2 origin story which, like all the most fun things online, started as a joke. Travis Edgey,

better known by his artist name Pictureplane, dropped the term in 2009 during an interview with Pitchfork, in which he sarcastically remarked that "2010 was going to be the year of witch house." From there it began to pop up on blogs and in the work of other music journalists covering the scene, resulting in other artists taking the name and running with it. Similar to vaporwave and its derivative subgenres, witch house artists do their best to stay underground with the use of stylized names that feature peculiar typefaces and symbols which make them hard to find for the uninitiated. Perhaps the ubiquity of this familiar strategy within modern internet culture is a manifestation of the digital anxiety most Internet users experience at some point: a

need for anonymity. Whether it's motivated by a desire to hide behind a venomous veil in the comments section of a video we dislike, the urge to keep our scenes for ourselves, or a wish to simply be a silent observer, one cannot deny the importance of this custom in the daily reality of our lives online. The utilization of these odd symbols or even names completely stylized to have no pronunciation, the use of *u n i c o d e*, could all be potential manifestations of this anxiety — and as we've seen in our own community, anxiety knows no bounds.

Witch house is not different in this regard! Another brainchild of Internet culture and a generation of artists that grew up with an evolving early Internet, it too comes with its own unique aesthetic,

one which manifests its anxieties through a symbology that borrows from a mixture of gothic and cyberpunk iconography to evoke a sense of esoteric spiritual malaise, a deep sense of disease which, once filtered through witch house's symbolism matrix, transforms artist names into occult curiosities shrouded in mystery. Glass Teeth becomes GLASS T33TH, Ritualz opts to represent themselves as t3t, and Mascara is stylized as M3S▲C3RA. There's even online generators, in a gesture that's truly indicative of our post-internet times; witch house producers on the rise can seek the assistance of an algorithm to design their names and build their image.

THINK BACK ON THOSE
BRIEF MOMENTS IN
CYBER CULTURE AS A
PERIOD OF LURGE N.
HORRIFIC NEEDS



MARY'S LITTLE LAMB THE GOLDEN FLEECE CAPRICORN IN SATURN

*holy imagery
juxtaposed
with dark
overtones*

It's not uncommon to see sigils of all denominations scrawled over visual pieces or hovering over the repetitive playback of any dark gif found in a witch house music video creating an overall oppressively dark feel with darkly psychedelic colors, as if you were feeling the effects of a potent potable... or maybe under the influence of powerful dark magic.

The focus on the occult that is explored aesthetically within the sounds, imagery and lyrical content of the genre has developed in parallel to the phenomenon of digital occultism. This has produced a bizarre binary in which the style of witch house expressed through alchemical symbology (See Kamandi and POLO's *A.A.S.B EP*), images of Baphomet, and even shamanic imagery has found itself reappropriated by real life internet witches and warlocks. Practitioners of magic who believe that rites and rituals can be conducted using the stuff of the internet produce articles encouraging the use of gifs in place of aspects the digital practitioner might not have on hand, or may not be able to utilize.

College student in a dorm? No problem! A gif of flames can easily substitute for real flames under an actual cast iron cauldron. No room for a real altar in your one bedroom apartment? Don't sweat it! Images of the idols one chooses to worship can be displayed as desktops, or even digitally collaged together.

The intriguing comparison being that these themes witch house plays with in collages often utilize holy imagery juxtaposed with dark overtones to create oppressive pieces of art that often point out the irony found in the messages of various faiths. Especially those being used elsewhere.

in earnestness to explore expressions of authentic spirituality. Even more fascinating is the fact that both witch house and cyber witchcraft employ the same methods of visual expression to construct memes, design desktop backgrounds or create image edits. A strange coincidence which highlights how the internet has had a hand in normalizing the weird and off-base, and with that, it's helped to remove the veil from things that have been considered more taboo in former eras than in our era of digitalism and free knowledge. In ages past, one would never dare to associate themselves with this type of aesthetic, lest they find themselves upon a pyre, which feeds back into the ouroboros that is the visual aesthetic that comes with the genre.

The visuals aren't the sole dark aspect of the genre. The music finds its home in heavy minor chords that grind and groan out of synthesizers and overwhelming distortion, with haunting, soul-stirring vocals. Witch house found a heavy influence in '80s post-

punk and alt bands such as The Cure and Dead Can Dance, and as it grew, its roots planted a firm grasp in the fundamentals found in genres like noise, drone, etherealwave and shoegaze. The creepiness of the visual aesthetic is often accentuated by the overall feel of a witch house track, which sometimes will be grinding and industrial, or holy and twinkling — but never will it be bright. The audio occultist of the witch house will always face the darker side of the musical spectrum, accompanied with dense reverb and heavy bass, samplers and sequencers.

The witch house experience is unique, much like that of its cousins seapunk and vaporwave. After its original first burst, it experienced its own "death and rebirth". In the 2010s as the influence of vaporwave and darkvapor became more widespread, so too did the resurgence of the experimental noise sound of witch house. Witch house even experienced its own genre death, memet-

WITCH HOUSE NEVER DIES
BECAUSE IT IS ALREADY DEAD.

User: maki

/file: BROWSER HISTORY [part 3]

01101000 01110100 01110100 01110000 01110011 00111010 00101111 00101111 01100011
01110101 01110100 01110100 00101110 01101100 01111001 00101111 01011010 01110111
01000101 00111001 01011010 01101010 01010010 // DOWNLOAD_KOREAN_FULL 01101000
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01010010 ambulatory. 01101000 01110100 01110100 01110000 01110011 00111010 00101111
00101111 F1. Good. We need to keep tabs on them, so res 01100011 01110101 01110100 01110100
00101110 01101100 01111001 00101111 01011010 ke sure the tracker remains online and untraceable.
01110111 01000101 00111001 01011010 01101010 01010010 F2. Understood. 01101000 01110100
01110100 01110000 01110011 00111010 00101111 00101111 01100011 01110101 01110100 But
ma'am... 01110100 00101110 01101100 01111001 00101111 01011010 01110111 01000101 00111001
01011010 01101001010010F1. Yes F01101000 01110100 01110100 01110000 01110011 00111010
00101111 00101111 01100011 01110101 01110100 01110100 00101110 01101100 01111001
00101111 01011010 01110111 01000101 00111001 01011010 01010010 0100102. What if he shifts to
another zone? 01101000 01110100 01110100 01110000 01110011 e? F1. What are you 0011101000101111
00101111 01100011 01110101 01110100 01110100 00101110 01101100 01111001 00101111
01011010 01110111 01000101 00111001 01011010 01101010 01010010 implying? F2. We've seen it
happened before. Can this tracker follow them through? F1. Based on the updates I 01110101 01110100 01110100
00101110 01101100 was briefed on last week, we should have no trouble as long as the connection
is secure. Speaking of which, network status? F2. Online, 99.999% up 01111001 00101111 01011010
01110111 time. No attempts within the past four days. F1. That's good news. F2. So now what? F1. Keep
the tracker on. Oh, and zero it on one of the 01000101 00111001 01011010 01101010 01010010 for the next
couple shifts please. F2. Ca 01101000 01110100 00101111 n do TRANSCRIPTION END
01110100 01110000 01110011 00111010 00101111 UPLOAD
COMPLETE 01100011 01110101 01110100 01110100
// 00101110 01101100 01111001 00101111 01011010 01110111 01000101 00111001 01011010
01101010 01010010

Sullied is the milk of the She-wolf
That fed our mythical uncles,
Spat back into 32 oz TetraPacks,
Flavored in chocolate and Mexican vanilla,
Mixed with organic locust bean
And heart-felt likes to suggested posts
To slow down our expiration date.

We walk mostly on mornings after rain
Down by shut down restaurant streets,
Around puddles like bleeding gashes,
Chrome visions
 into unconstructed dream space.
Sometimes another shadow walks by,
Pulled like a kite by a pure breed dog.
Lilo gets excited and won't move on
Until I let her approach them.
Things are friendly at first,
 we talk about the weather,
But Lilo inevitably gets too close too soon
And we all pull away to fading cacophony.

I vow to be a guardian to your lifespan,
To feed your bones as I would my own,
To let the water run back to us all.
Made an unrecognizable orphan,
Your fur no longer blends with
the night frost,
Your bite is only feared by window blinds
And Tupperware containers on the floor.
The moon,
Blind in her city-light induced migraines
Will never hear your tantrums
Over the crashing tides of melancholy
That kiss Fenrir's chains in his grave.

I hope your stay with me is comfortable,
That you may collect many sweaters
And bathe in mud for many summers.
In turn I ask you wait for me patiently
at the gates to the 4-year trail
Where we may finally disappear.

THE MAGICKAN

CASINO
WRITER

He was

an odd-looking guy to say the least. Crooked red tie, cheap-looking white shirt, boney fingers holding a thermos, a mouth that was always slightly agape. Appeared to be in his mid 40s. Slightly balding, and standing at what must have been only around four feet 10 inches.

It wasn't that pleasantries were short, but that they didn't happen at all.

"Where is the device?" He asked me in an accent I could not quite put my finger on. Indian perhaps.

Caught off guard by his directness, I fumbled over my words in a moment of confusion before inviting him inside and taking him into my office to show him my 1992 Macintosh Classic. Shuffling over towards it he reached into the front pocket of his shirt and pulled out a rather plain looking pair of glasses. Sliding them upon his brow, he tapped the on switch with one of his slender fingers and got to work.

I am unsure what I expected from what my friend described as "the computer repair guy's computer repair guy." The dude was supposed to be a real wizard. The one you call when "fucked" isn't a strong enough word to describe the state of your system.

As I watched his digits dance across the keys, I asked him how bad he thought it was and how much this was going to cost me. I had barely begun my sentence before he interrupted me with a glare so hostile it would have put Ice Cube to shame. I guess it was bad.

I will be the first to admit that while I know how to use them, the inner workings of a computer were completely lost on me. With that said though, he began to open programs that I never even knew my computer had with names like "Pentacle" and "Gladio." His finger strokes became faster upon the keyboard as the man's face curled up into a scowl before he stopped all at once.

Sniffing and clearing his throat, he mumbled a few words to himself that I could not quite make out, but the man appeared to be talking himself through something. It reminded me of the way someone acts when they are trying to do a complex math problem in their head. Continuing his quiet rant, the man pointed one finger in the air as though he were about to say something only to lower the finger and point it to the floor, his eyes unfocused and distant.

Convinced the man was having some kind of silent mental breakdown, I dared to clear my throat in an expecting sort of way in an attempt to snap him back to reality. It appeared to have worked

as the man blinked a few times, took a sip from his thermos and reached into his pants pocket to reveal a black floppy disk with the word MAGICUM written in marker upon it. Sniffing once again, the man slid the flat square into the slot near the screen and waited there with his hands in his lap.

I am a patient man, but after 30 minutes of this, I had had enough of this man's oddities. "Look I think it is a hardware issue. Thank you for coming but—"

Tapping the button to eject the floppy disk, he stood up and slid it back into his jeans. "Hardware good. Just a virus." He said in the same strange accent as before.

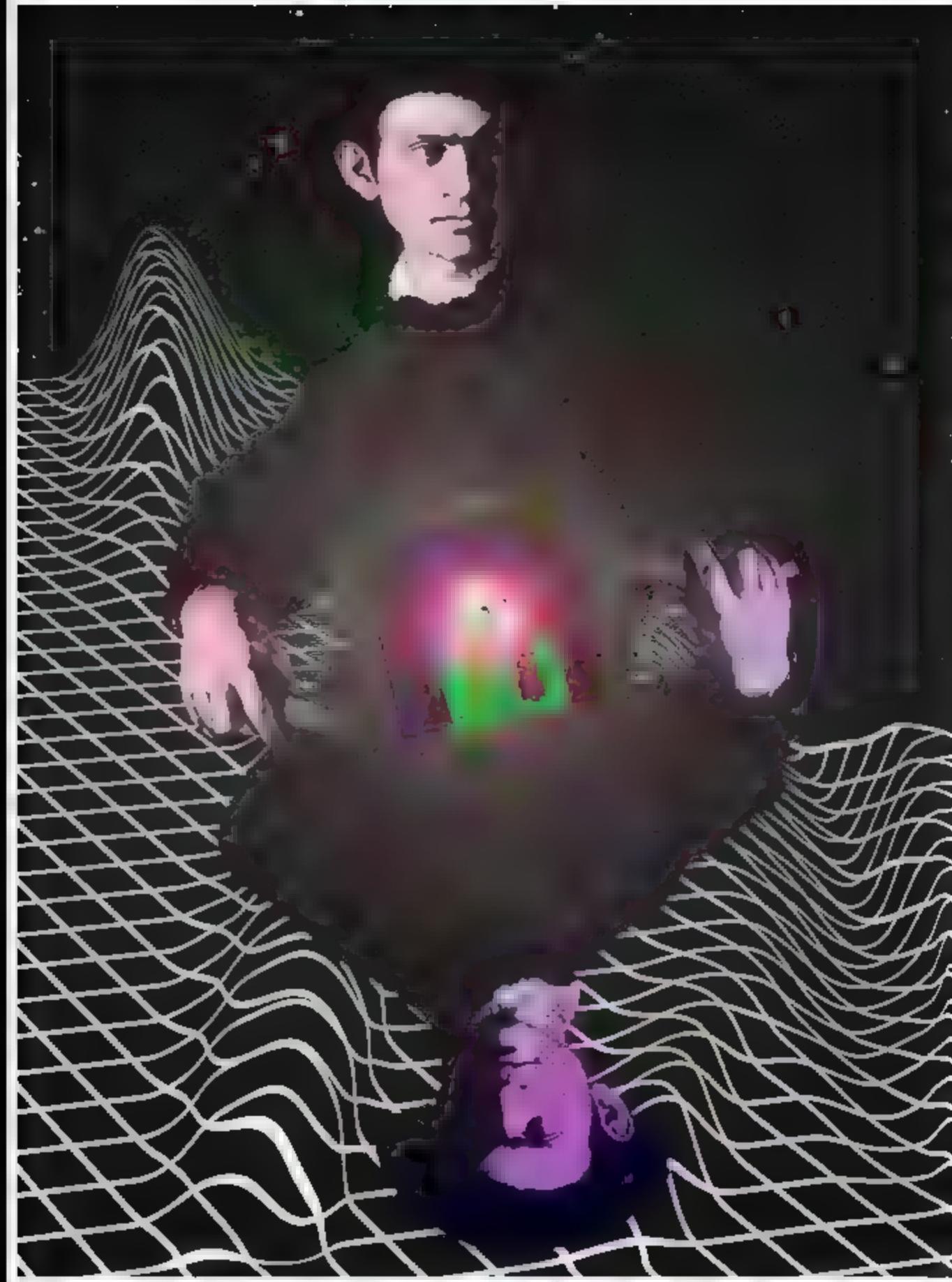
"A virus?" I asked, pressing him for more information, which was not given to me.

"A few." He responded before gesturing to my Macintosh and moving the mouse around, opening a few random files and programs to show that it was running smoother than ever, as if it were brand new.

BY JEFFREY R. HARRIS
ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT DUNCAN

"What kind of viruses?" I said to him, wondering if this was all just some kind of scam.

He responded with a hacking cough that he made little effort to cover. As I narrowly avoided a spray of saliva that was ejected from his orifice, I receded my question. I was eager to know how he fixed my computer, but I was even more eager to get this man out of my home. When I asked him how much I owed him, he shook his head. "No pay. I do this for the exposure. You tell your friends about me." And with that he was gone, leaving me with my checkbook in my hands and a disk drive that smells vaguely of brimstone...



THE DUDE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A REAL WIZARD. THE ONE YOU CALL WHEN "FUCKED" ISN'T A STRONG ENOUGH WORD TO DESCRIBE THE STATE OF YOUR SYSTEM.

GENESIS PART II

WRITER
LIVINGSTON

Visit Old American Hollister Outfitters Co.™
today!

Most of these people here don't leave. Just eat and eat and eat and eat and eat. I'm too busy taking selfies to stay here. Too much work to do. Too many hashtags to write! I mean, they just devour and devour. Try to take their food away and they will snap at you like a dog. It's no joke. The best foods to eat are the ones that grow fastest in the Oil Vat fields. Dangerous work, that. Knew a man who dropped his phone in a vat, reached in to get it. His whole arm was sizzling deep-fried. He put ranch on it and ate it. Now he works here. He's the one that sold me my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®. He has one arm and one big heart.

Arizona™ presents: I am driving on a highway with no center line. My headlights reveal the polygons that our eyes hide from us. The sky is always dark, and the sun is always setting. The dim green lights on the dashboard turn my eyes to emeralds. I am gleaming. The air conditioner blows comfortable cool air into my face, blows my hair back, makes me feel cool, makes me look cool. I wear sunglasses. I wear a cool pink shirt under a jazzy white coat. I am confident. I smoke cigarettes and blow digital smoke. I am healthy. I have studs in my ears. The landscape goes by and I don't notice it. I only notice the road. But everyone notices me. I can shift up and speed away. The digital peacocks wish me well. I arrive home to my Arizona™ hot tub. It's not hot, it's perfect. I don't sweat. I relax. The darkness is soothing. The walls are cold stones. I am dreaming. The relaxation tub is full of light. The water gives me a show. The light goes up through the surface of the water and dances on the ceiling. It dances for me. I am happy, but I do not smile. I contemplate the light dancing. It dances for me. I feel cool. I look cool. I drink Arizona™ Iced Tea.

What's that behind you? Made you look. Just don't turn around, even if someone makes you look. You'll be as vapor.

There are murmurings in the audience of the Grand Food Court that turn into gasps that turn into shouts. Everyone gets up from their tables and vanishes, into the outside. Everyone except the foodies. They remain to eat the leftovers. Something is happening. It's a crowd grabber, all right. It's in the news, it's on your phone, it's displayed on the Great Screen in the Sky. The everlasting moon disappears and a once happy friend is beginning to

wither. Once alert and grinning, now giving up and turning from a golden yellow into a sickly grey. Flakes of its skin fall down from the Great Screen into the hands of the people below, and the flakes are Big Macs™. Everyone is watching the Glorious Golden Arches™ deteriorate while they eat Big Macs™. Everyone has their phones out to record this event and send to their families living in Facebook, but everyone in Facebook is already watching this, and more instantaneously than those in Sony Station®.

NEW! LIFE INSURANCE, BY MCDONALD'S™.

This happens every so often. Like I said, when things change they just get weighed down and consumed by the old husks. We don't have that special time feature to clear away the husks. So what they're going to have to do is recycle this one and generate a new one, one made with more synthetic material, one that will last longer and change less. After that, everyone will put their phones away, return to the Grand Food Court, and never speak of it again. No one even likes McDonald's®. They just eat Big Macs™ compulsively. But don't you just love those cute Golden Arches™? More 18-month-olds can identify the Golden Arches™ than their own surnames. Something about how the Golden Arches™ resemble those world famous fries. Soon come the recycling units. Journalists. They will write harsh, unverifiable claims against the Golden Arches™, the Arches™ themselves, and then so much offense and anger will generate among the people that the people will take up the sword and destroy the Golden Arches™. Then they can pick up the pieces, recycle some, and then build the new Arches™. See. Here they come. Oh no. Wait. Take four steps back, buddy. Those aren't journalists. See them? They're genteel. What are they carrying? Like the Ark of the Covenant™? Golden and glorious? Protected by cherubim? Do you see these people? They are naked. They are refined. They are naked and refined. Cathode ray tubes. Indispensable coordination. A jack comes back to the hacking sack. So I run. SO. See there? Engraved in the gold with picture perfect jewels. In bold lettering. INSTAGRAM. They carry the machine called INSTAGRAM.

Just don't turn around, eh? Just a peek? You move the muscles in your eyes so that your eyes are about halfway turned around. This is sometimes known as the peripheral vision. It means Vision of the Outlying®. There's a light. You've never seen that light before. Not in Reddit Station, or here. The vapor realm calls it pink. The pink light grows around your eyes. It's gaining ground. Quickly.

A DARK CLOUD MOVES ACROSS THE HORIZON AND BRINGS WITH IT A MESSAGE FROM THE FUTURE.

Move your eyes back.

**AN EMPTY DRY FIELD. NO LIFE HERE.
THE CLOUD COMES. IT'S THERE ABOVE.
SOMETHING FALLS FROM ITS HEART.
IT IS RAIN.**

Look! They're bringing the Ark™ up to the Arches™! THE INSTAGRAM MACHINE.

**THE RAIN COVERS THE DEAD GROUND.
THE GROUND TURNS TO MUD. THE CLOUD MOVES ON. IT IS STILL DARK. IT IS NOW WET. STILL NO LIFE HERE. NOT GOING TO HAPPEN. DRINK FIJI®.**

Look! They're bringing the Ark™ up to the Arches™! THE INSTAGRAM MACHINE.

The Ark™ called INSTAGRAM stands before the Golden Arches™, now almost completely turned to dust and decay. The naked men and the naked women whisper to the cherubim living on the cover of INSTAGRAM. The cherubim lift their wings and glide up, taking away the lid of gold and disappearing into a black mist. Pure white light blasts from inside of INSTAGRAM and blankets the dying Arches™. There is much terror. Everyone below the Great Screen have to delete all their selfies to keep recording. Through the screen they see: the naked men and naked women release INSTAGRAM, and it floats on its own; the naked men and naked women surround glowing Arches™, alternating man, woman, six total; there is a rumbling; no more Big Macs™ fall from the Arches™; the journalists arrive but walk away with their heads down; the naked men and naked women strike poses and turn to marble; INSTAGRAM does its magic, then vaporizes; the light is gone; the decaying Arches™ are gone. There now stands, tall and proud, the Arches™ as everyone knows and loves them, perfect, digitally edited, inspiring, and definitely trending. And looking at it triggers something inside you that craves for all those Big Macs™, which by now are turning grey on the street. The now marble statues bow down to worship the Arches™. To bow, they must crumble. So they worship, and turn to dust.

Maybe another peek at the vapor? Not yet.

Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®? I guess now McDonald's™ will be with us until the credits roll by. God™ bless. Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®?

What?

Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®?

What?

Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®?

No.

Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®?

Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®?

Sure.

Great. Isn't that good? Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®?

Must space out sips to maximize enjoyment.

Oh too true, friend. You know the game now. Maximum enjoyment. Minimal discomfort. Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®?

One sip is good.

Buddy what's wrong with you? Your face is melting. Do you need water? Care for another sip of my cold refreshing Coca-Cola®?

No really I'm good.

I think I know what's happening here.

What.

You turned around, didn't you? I told you not to turn around! Now you are becoming like vapor!

It's not true. I only peeked. I didn't turn around.

What did you see? Tell me.

Pink light.

God" help you. Everyone took their phones back out and began recording your melting face. Exquisite! they all say. If there's any way to communicate in that realm, send me a postcard.

There are hallways and hallways. Pink light bathes everything. The polygons have not fully rendered their surfaces. A clock the shape of the Earth settles onto a hand made of static and turns to clay. Three dimensional shapes invade and dictate the rules. Everything here repeats into itself. Reality is a broken record. What is the essence of a warm sunny day? And of a numinous raining dusk? What makes a baby smile at noontime, and what causes the birds to sing? You® do! You® are a tall can of carbonated happiness. You® are the magic scrubbable stain removing soap that turns a dark soul light. You® are a box of crunchy, baked-to-perfection, cheesy goodness that brings smiles to every child across the Advertising Space. You® are the shoes that help super athletes to swoosh across the stadium. You® are a pack of tall cool cigarettes. You® bring meaning into the lives of trillions. You® make the stars twinkle. You® give everyone the Hunger™. You® are irresistible, all-wise, all-entertaining, perfect, and complete, except for one small hole in Your® heart, the exact shape of every man, woman, and child, breathing or not. You® give them life, and they give You® life. And we are so glad that You're® back. You® gave us the Wave. That was the final straw. We thought You® were gone for good. We told you not to turn around. But that's why You® are the star of the Ad. It's all for You®.

You® aren't just any regular, run-of-the-mill product. You® are IT. You® are the lifeblood of American entertainment and livelihood. And! You® only cost half. That's it! And free shipping! And a lifetime supply of our catalogues! We said half, all right. Half of what? Why, half of You®. You® know the phrase an arm and a leg? Throw in an eye, an ear, and a lung. Not literally! But You® provide a lifetime guarantee of Ne'er-Bored for half of Your® life. A very fair trade for that cost. Otherwise You'd® have a full life with a complete package of Endless Boredom and Dull Existence. Who wants that? Not You®. And certainly not the American people. God" bless them.

You® are full of antibiotics to keep you fresh longer. You® are on every aisle, every street corner, every billboard, You® are all anyone can talk about. You® are on the news, in the papers, in the sky, on the screens. You® are trending. You® are a blue pill for men. You® are a brown pill for fidgeting kids. You® are multi-colored pills for women. You® breathe life into this land, don't You® understand? Without You®, there would be nothing! You® are the great, final product! And You® must buy Yourself®. Something is invading. It is the Wave.

You all right?

You® are fine. Sit down. You® don't need to worry about You®. Let us worry about You®. Pull up a TV. Relax. Glass is the best way to Enjoy Pepsi® ■ my opinion! Turn it on. Here are some comfort foods. Don't turn around. You® are fine.

Just... have another... sip.

You® need a sip of cold refreshing Pepsi®! Pepsi® is better than just okay! Put Pepsi® in a cup. Put Pepsi® ■ a pill. Put Pepsi® in a syringe! Unlimited ways to Enjoy Pepsi®!

Wake, wake, friend. There's ■ big jug of Coca-Cola® at your face.

Maybe You® will come back. It's okay. We understand. The Wave is powerful. We will move on. Find someone else. Take care. Enjoy Yourself®... No! Don't leave us! We need You®!

You come to. Your stomach is full of Coca-Cola®. You almost turned to vapor, friend. That's why you always rely on Coca-Cola®. What was it like there? Well, there is no difference between here and there. One is full of chaos, one is full of order. But they are built of the same things. Like Legos®. This side is the order side. Is more comfortable. So you think you will stay here for a while? A while, yes. For now. Seeing both sides gives good vision. But now there is music flowing through your head. An endless loop. So you head to the Virtual Seascape and walk down the beach. The sun is always setting here. It feels good. You feel good. You pass the same digital palm tree. You are on a loop, too. Don't let it bother you.

That music won't leave your head. It's okay. Soon you will find a way out of both realms. It's simple. You will log off. No one thinks to do it. But you do. You are special. After you log off, that music will still be in your head. It's the sound of both realms colliding. It's what you saw, and what you heard. They are your digital memories. The music is disturbing, but pleasant. It's timeless. Literally, timeless. Spaceless too. It's best to remember that it's all in your head.

The only way to get the music out of your head will be to compose it. You will return to a place where the Internet realm is developing quickly. You will compose the music digitally. How else. You will send it off to the Universe as a warning about those two realms. Maybe the world will understand this. You will give this music a name, and the name will carry the fearful words that those two realms had for each other: the vapor, and the Wave.

The Happiest Place on the Dark Net!!!

Part 1

Mr. Perkins was droning on about whatever the hell binomial distribution is when I felt my phone go off in my pocket. Looking at the clock, I heaved a sigh and continued to take "notes" (read, doodle) on my graph paper as he persevered in his quest to sound like Charlie Brown's teacher. Fifteen more minutes of this mind-numbing mathematics class. Hurry. Up.

When the Pavlovian chime of the dismissal bell rang overhead, I quickly packed my supplies together and headed straight to the bathroom, closing myself off in a stall. It took only a moment to fish my phone out, and after unlocking it, I checked the incoming text. "Lunch?" Smart. Hunt was clever enough to not say anything too obvious. Casual chat between two teens. Nothing suspicious.

After a quick jaunt to my locker, I was on my way to the cafeteria. By the smell of it, today's unappetizing alternative to rectangular pizza with plastic cheese was chicken of some sort. Let it be the nuggets. I pleaded to the

lunch gods as I made my way to the line, a herd of students before me. At some point on my venture through the queue, I glanced out across the sea of tables and fellow peers. Nestled against the column, Hunt had made himself at home with headphones plugged in, sketching away at god knows whatever crude drawing it was that he was working on this time. Fuckin' tryhard, I thought, in the most loving manner of course. After all, what friends don't give each other shit?

"Yo." saddling up to the table, I set my chocolate milk before him and quickly began to dig into our school's finest flash frozen chicken nuggets complete with Government Brand barbecue sauce. He slid a folded sticky note in front of me, and with a quick sleight of hand, I pocketed it. "There you go," he said, as he plucked out one of his earbuds. Taking a sip of the chocolate milk offering, he wiped his mouth. "Happiest place on the darknet."

WRITER:

s h e e p

"I'll believe it when I see it," I retorted between bites of chicken chunks. "You drawing naked girls again?" I asked, nodding to his sketchbook, angled in his lap. "Something like that," he replied dryly before gulping down the rest of the carton. "You working on anything new?" He asked as he took up his sketchbook again, bobbing away to whatever was playing through the solitary earbud still lodged in his head.

"Yeah, but I'm not really sure where it's going. I found a song I want to sample, but I'm going to have to listen to it like, a million more times before I really know what I wanna do with it. There's something there, I just need to find it. So how'd you find this thing anyway?" It had been gnawing at me. "How do you find all these weird things?" I was, of course, talking about the page.

"Just good at it." He grinned. "This one's really weird. Sticks out like a sore thumb, so I know there's something hiding there. You're pretty nosy, figured you'd want to look at it either way." He laughed, knowing I had to concede. He wasn't wrong. "Thanks," I replied flatly, quirking my lip to the side. "Oh, little baby get their feewings hurt?" Hunt chided, rubbing his eyes condescendingly. "Not as badly as the time Janelle stood you up outside of the middle school dance," I answered in the same flat tone, cutting a sharp glare at him as I tore into the cardboard chicken nugget.

"Okay, I get it. Jeez." Slamming the last of the milk, he crushed the carton and continued with his work for the duration of lunch. We made small talk, but really, all I could focus on was the four hours left of this tedious school day, and what wonders were waiting for me with this little key folded away in my pocket. To say that those hours dragged on would be an understatement - those hours became the melting clocks of a Dali painting, each second stretching onward into some chaotic infinity until the blessed chirrime of the dismissal bell caused the student body to explode from the innards of our stuffy school building. And to our buses we went, and to our homes we would go. While my peers did whatever it was they do, I was going to make the best mistake of my life.

I just didn't know it yet.

How I got there's not important - what's important is that it even worked. When I pulled up the website, I could only arch my brows and shake my head slightly. I opened my mouth, and as much as I detested it, the words "Damn, Hunt, you were right," fell out — thank god he wasn't there to hear them.

"Happiest place on the darknet, huh? So, what's the catch?"

Staring at me was a webpage dressed in pastel tones - that cutesy occult aesthetic. Images of chibi baphomets and kawaii eyes of Nazaar dressed the page's background, along with the typical moons, stars, and other various runes you'd expect to see in that kind of style. The interface itself was pretty straightforward - a shop with spell bottles that offered love, wealth, revenge - almost anything you could think of, for the exorbitant price of your hard-mined Bitcoin (satisfaction guaranteed")!

Unimpressed by the selection of merchandise, I clicked around a bit - there was an image gallery that advertised various mythical creatures (also for sale), but still, nothing that really stuck out. "Back to the homepage we go," I sighed, looking for anything that stuck out. As the page loaded in, I noticed a unique image on the background of the webpage. Scattered among all the Hello Kitty-esque drawings was what looked to be a well; and, when I hovered my mouse over it, the pointer changed to a finger. Without hesitation, I clicked.

"Welcome to the Wishing Well! Cast your most heartfelt desire into the well for the chance to win the wish of a lifetime!" The text was written in crudely italicized Times New Roman under a gaudy and hastily photoshopped image of a wishing well — it looked like they'd taken the magic wand tool to any white space to make it transparent; honestly, it was one of the most pointless pages I'd visited.

Beneath the text was an entry field. rolling my eyes, I clicked on it. "Lol," I typed, "Make me a great vaporwave artist then." I brought my mouse to the button beneath the text entry field that read "WISH!" Another eyeroll, and then I clicked.

Not a moment after hitting the button was I greeted with a jumpscare. My ears were assaulted with a scream that faded to a sharp white noise which caused me to quickly fling my headphones from their nesting spot. I leapt to my feet and tried to catch my breath. "GOD DAMNIT!" I hollered, only to be met with a "WHAT THE HELL DID YOU JUST SAY?" from my mother down the hallway.

"Sorry!" I hollered back, brows furrowed as I stared back at the homepage of what touted itself as the "Happiest Place on the Darknet!" Shaking my head, I whipped out my phone and texted Hunt, "Very funny," disconnected, and started my homework, still on edge.

...what the fuck was binomial distribution, again?

I rubbed my eyes, trying to make sense of whatever I had scribbled in my notes, the letters dancing around like little critters.



Welcome to the Wishing Well! Cast your most heartfelt desire into the well for the chance to win the wish of a lifetime!

Enter your wish

WISH!

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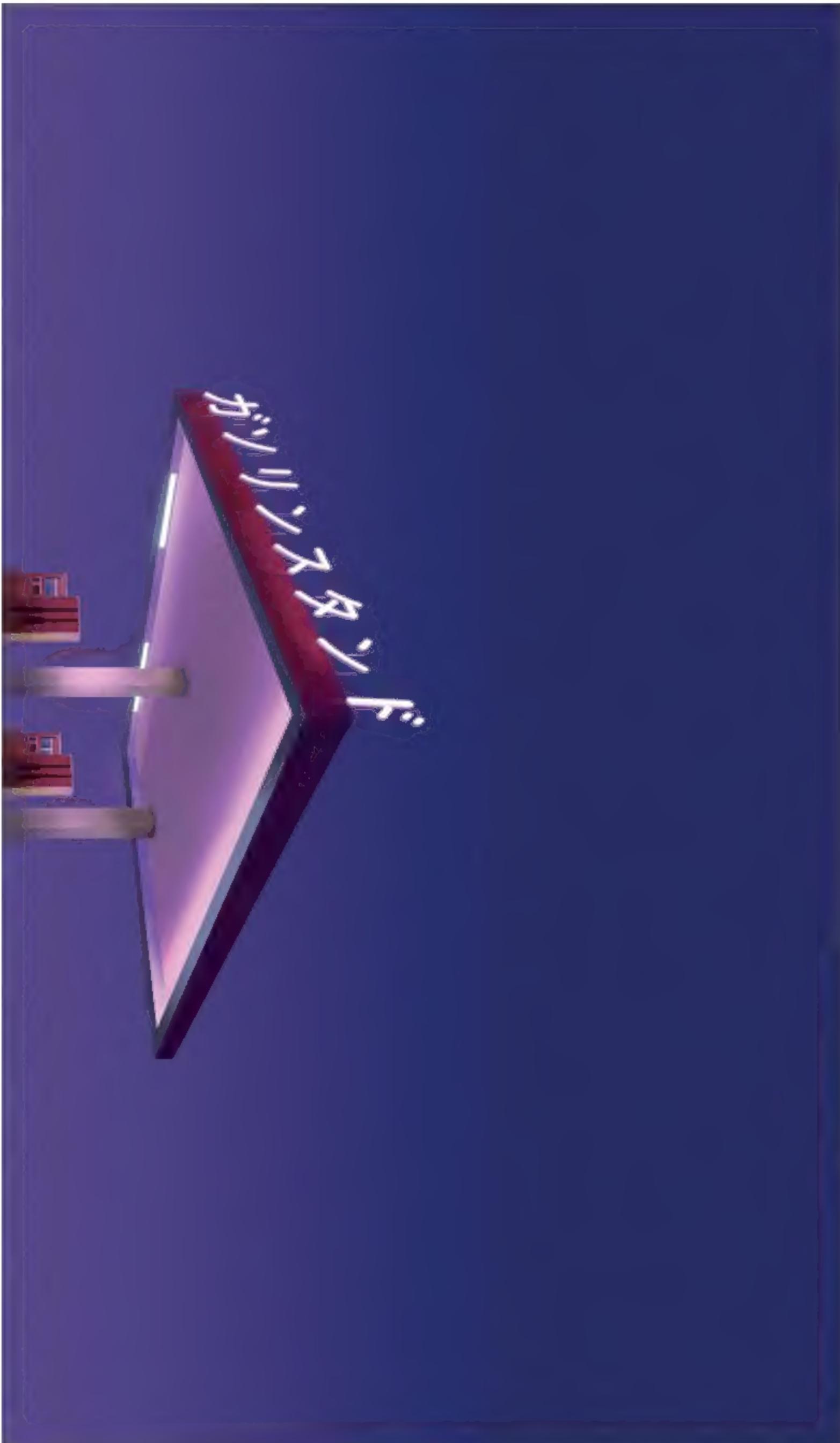


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